

**Supplemental Notes:**

*The Books  
of  
1 & 2 Samuel*

*compiled  
by  
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## Acknowledgments

These notes have been assembled from speaking notes and related materials which had been compiled from a number of classic and contemporary commentaries and other sources detailed in the bibliography, as well as other articles and publications of Koinonia House. While we have attempted to include relevant endnotes and other references, we apologize for any errors or oversights.

The complete recordings of the sessions, as well as supporting diagrams, maps, etc., are also available in various audiovisual formats from the publisher.

## Audio Listing

### 1 Samuel 1 - 3

Introduction. Background. Hannah, a Godly Mother. Saul, a Careless Father.

### 1 Samuel 4 - 6

Philistines capture ark of God; God's glory departs from Israel; God provoked with Philistines because of the Ark; Ark returned to Israel.

### 1 Samuel 7 - 9

Summary of Samuel's ministry; Israel demands a king; Samuel warns about a king; God Chooses Saul as king.

### 1 Samuel 10 - 12

Saul privately anointed king; Saul publicly installed as king of Israel; Saul defeats the Ammonites.

### 1 Samuel 13 - 16

Saul's self-seeking and cowardice; Saul intrudes into priest's office and is rejected by God; Israel is helpless before the Philistines; Jonathan's bold assault; Subsequent victory of Israel; Saul's rash order overridden.

### 1 Samuel 17 - 20

David slays Goliath; David beloved by Jonathan; Jealous Saul attempts to slay David; David Marries Saul's Daughter; David is protected from Saul; Saul angry with Jonathan.

### 1 Samuel 21 - 26

David seeks safety from Saul at Gath; Saul slays priests; David saves Keilah from the Philistines; Samuel dies and is mourned.

### 1 Samuel 27 - 31

David seeks shelter; Saul consults witch of En-dor; David kept from fighting Israel; Israel defeated on Gilboa; Saul and Jonathan slain.

## Audio Listing

### 2 Samuel 1 - 4

David hears of Saul's death; David received as king by Judah; Joab murders Abner; Ish-bosheth is murdered.

### 2 Samuel 5 - 7

David becomes king over all Israel; Jerusalem becomes capital; David brings ark to Jerusalem; David's desire to build the LORD a house.

### 2 Samuel 8 - 10

Extension of David's kingdom; David and Mephibosheth; The Ammonite-Syrian campaigns under Joab.

### 2 Samuel 11 - 12

David's great sin; Nathan rebukes David; David repents of his sin with Bathsheba; Birth of Solomon.

### 2 Samuel 13 - 15

Consequences of David's sin; Absalom avenges Tamar and flees to Geshur; David Forgives Absalom; Absalom's rebellion; David flees; Ark returned to Jerusalem.

### 2 Samuel 16 - 18

Ziba, the false servant of Mephibosheth; Shimei curses David; Hushai's warning saves David; Joab slays Absalom.

### 2 Samuel 19 - 21

David's Return and Reestablishment of Authority; Slaughter and Burial of Saul's sons; Post-Flood Nephilim.

### 2 Samuel 22 - 24

David's final words; His mighty men; David's sin in taking a census.

## Session 1 1 Samuel 1, 2, 3

### Israel's Last Judge

Samuel, Israel's last and greatest judge, was also a prophet (1 Sam 3:20) and a priest (9:12-13). In his old age he served as God's adviser to Israel's first king, Saul. Samuel anointed Israel's greatest king, David.

Together the two books of Samuel cover the history of Israel from the last quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the first quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup>. They explain Israel's transition from loosely associated tribes led by local judges to a unified nation led by kings.

The Book of 1 Samuel can be outlined as the story of two men, though the Biblical focus soon shifts from the flawed Saul to his more godly successor, David.

### Outline

<b>Samuel</b>	1 - 8
Early Life	1 - 3
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Mizpah	7
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Saul anointed	9 - 12
Saul rejected	13 - 15
Saul and David	16 - 20
David a fugitive	21 - 30
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### Early Life

The events in these opening chapters of the book center around three persons: Hannah, a Godly mother; Eli, a failing father; and Samuel, the last and greatest "Judge" and a national prophet and priest.

# 1 Samuel 1

## Hannah—a Godly Mother (1:1–2:11)

- 1] Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-Zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name *was* Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite:

This area, otherwise known simply as Ramah (“the height”), was in the hill country about 25 miles north of Jerusalem. Ramah was Samuel’s birthplace [vv. 19-20], residence [7:17], and burial place [25:1]. (Perhaps, according to Eusebius, it is also to be identified with Arimathea, the home of Joseph of Arimathea of New Testament times.)

Elkanah’s description as an Ephraimite could appear troublesome since Samuel served as a priest, an office reserved exclusively for Levites. However, Elkanah was a direct descendant of Levi (1 Chr 6:33-38) and was therefore qualified to function in a priestly capacity. He was a Levite by lineage but an Ephraimite by residence.

- 2] And he had two wives; the name of the one *was* Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

While God’s perfect pattern for the family from the very beginning had been one husband and one wife, “because of the hardness of men’s hearts” (Mt 19:8), God permitted polygamy. See Deut 21:15–17.

- 3] And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, *were* there.

**Shiloh**, the place some 15 miles north of Ramah where Joshua had located the tabernacle (Josh 18:1).

- 4] And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:  
5] But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb.

According to Deut 7:13-14, having children was a sign of God’s blessing. Conversely the Israelites considered the inability to bear children as a curse.

- 6] And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.

Elkanah was a godly man but he had a divided home, and his favorite wife, Hannah (“grace”), carried a constant burden of sorrow because of her barrenness and because of the persecution of the other wife. Like many of us, Hannah was sure that she had the right to be bitter...Watch out for those “justified” hurts! They are the most dangerous of all!! In Hannah’s case her childlessness was a double burden. “Her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her” (v. 6).

Year after year when Elkanah took his family to Shiloh to worship at the tabernacle there, Hannah met her family and friends—still childless. There her constant pain peaked, and she could hardly bear her fate. The Bible says that she was bitter. We can understand why Hannah felt bitter: she was denied something she wanted desperately. Hannah’s childlessness had at least two tragic effects. First, it colored her whole outlook on life. She wept often, and would not eat. She was “down-hearted.” And in her prayer to God, Hannah spoke of her condition as “misery.” How tragic when we are so burdened that we’re unable to experience the simple joys that enrich our lives.

- 7] And *as* he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.

The Law required all adult Hebrew males to appear at the tabernacle or temple of the LORD for the three major religious festivals of the year (Ex 23:14-17).

- 8] Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? *am* not I better to thee than ten sons?

Hannah’s depression was so great that she could not even recognize evidences of the grace of God. Hannah had no child, but she had a husband who loved her and who was sympathetic. We can sense Elkanah’s love in his words encouraging Hannah to eat: “Don’t I mean more to you than 10 sons?”

So often when we feel bitter and downcast we too are unable to sense, in the good gifts God has given us, evidences of His love and grace. *Hannah’s perspective was so totally colored by her personal tragedy that she could not sense the beauty, the good, or grace with which God infuses every believer’s life.*

- 9] So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

The word “temple” in 1:9 simply means “a large public building” and does not refer to Solomon’s temple which had not yet been built; it refers here to the Tabernacle.

- 10] And she *was* in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

Hannah was a woman of prayer, so it is no surprise to find her son Samuel a great man of prayer. So burdened was her heart that Hannah left the feast without eating and went to the tabernacle to pray.

In her bitterness, Hannah took two vital steps. First, she took her bitterness to God. And second, in prayer she began to reorder priorities. Hannah made a commitment to dedicate the son she prayed for to the Lord. She no longer wanted a child just for herself. She began to look beyond her own needs, and to envision the good that meeting her need might do for others.

- 11] And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

Hannah did not “bargain” with the Lord; rather, she proved her spirituality by willingly offering God her best—her firstborn son. Verse 21 suggests that her husband agreed with the vow; see also Num 30:6–16. This dedication of her son was a commitment to the Nazarite vow, described in Num 6:1–8. It was the same vow undertaken by the parents of Samson whom they dedicated to the LORD under nearly identical circumstances (Judg 13:2–5).

Eli, the High Priest, certainly judged Hannah severely (Mt 7:1–5), especially considering that his own sons were “sons of Belial [Satan]” (see 2:12).

- 12] And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth.

Hannah’s prayer was a desperate one, so heartfelt that her lips moved, even though she was praying in her heart.

- 13] Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

The high priest at the time, Eli, thought she was drunk and rebuked her.

- 14] And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.  
15] And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, *I am* a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.  
16] Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.  
17] Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant *thee* thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

When she explained that she was praying out her anguish and grief, Eli blessed her and Hannah went away with a strange assurance. We read that she ate, and “her face was no longer downcast” (v. 18).

- 18] And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more *sad*.

That prayer of Hannah’s was answered: she conceived and bore a child whom she named Samuel. A child who would grow up to become one of the Bible’s most significant characters.

- 19] And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.

## Her Surrender

God answered Hannah’s prayers and sent a son, so she named him Samuel, “asked of the Lord.” Jewish women weaned their children at about the age of three; at that time Hannah took Samuel to Eli and fulfilled her vow to the Lord.

The three bullocks were probably for the sin offering, burnt offering, and special offering for the Nazarite vow; see Num 15:8.

“For this child I prayed.” What a testimony from a godly mother! See 2 Tim 1:5. If we had more parents like Elkanah and Hannah, we would have more godly people like Samuel. “Lent” means “given”; Samuel belonged to the Lord for the rest of his life.

20] Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying*, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

Though the name technically means “his name is God” or something similar, Hannah may, by assonance, have understood the name to mean “asked of God.” She had “asked” (שָׁאֵל *sha’el*) God for a son, and He had “heard” (שָׁמָע *shama*) her. “Samuel,” then, would be associated with שְׁמוּעַל *Shemuw’el*, “heard of God,” because she had asked the Lord for him.

## Praise for Answered Prayer

21] And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.

22] But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, *I will not go up* until the child be weaned, and *then* I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever.

When Samuel was weaned, which according to custom would have been about age three (Cf. 2 Maccabees 7:27), he was taken to Shiloh and presented to Eli. Hannah told how she prayed for this child, and now he was given to the Lord for lifetime service.

23] And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the LORD establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

24] And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child *was* young.

25] And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

26] And she said, Oh my lord, *as* thy soul liveth, my lord, *I am* the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD.

27] For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:

28] Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.

While Elkanah was worshiping (1:28), his wife was praying and praising God. Hannah certainly exemplifies a godly mother, for she put God first, she believed in prayer, she kept her vows, and she gave God all the glory. It must have been painful for Hannah to leave Samuel. But Hannah’s prayer, recorded in Chapter 2, is a prayer of pure joy.

## 1 Samuel 2

1] And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.

2] *There is* none holy as the LORD: for *there is* none beside thee: neither *is there* any rock like our God.

3] Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let *not* arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD *is* a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

4] The bows of the mighty men *are* broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.

5] *They that were* full have hired out themselves for bread; and *they that were* hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

Hannah eventually had five other children (v. 21), but the expression “seven children” here symbolizes the full granting of her desire for a son.

6] The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

Perhaps even more significant, it is a prayer that shows a deep awareness of who God is. Hannah acknowledged God as holy (v. 2), as One who knows and weighs human deeds (v. 3). Hannah saw Him as the One who satisfies the needy (v. 5), who is Master of life and death, of poverty and wealth (v. 6). Her sense of the power and glory of God is summed up beautifully in these verses:

7] The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

8] He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set *them* among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth *are* the LORD’S, and he hath set the world upon them.

9] He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

10] The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

“King”!? This is a pre-monarchal prophecy! “Anointed” = *Meshiach*.

What a tremendous reorientation! The same Hannah who was so bitter and downcast that she could not even sense God’s grace now saw the Lord clearly. In fact, she was able to praise God in a situation which some might expect would throw her back into despair—the loss of the very child she had prayed for!



What was so different? Hannah now was able to look beyond herself and her own needs. She could sense God's love now, and trust Him. And she could sense the future that God had for this first child she loved so deeply. Because Hannah truly had given her son to the Lord, she trusted God to care for him and to give him a fulfilling life.

We have many models of prayer in the O.T. Among the greatest are: Gen 18:16–33; Ex 32:11–14; Num 14:11–19; 2 Sam 7:18–29; 12:13–23; 1 Kgs 8:22–53; 2 Kgs 19:14–19; 2 Chr 20:6–12; and Ezra 9:5–15.

[Compare this passage with Mary's song in Luke 1:46–55. In both cases, the women praise God for His victory and for honoring the prayers of the humble. Note the two names of Christ in 2:10—"His King" and "His Anointed" (Messiah, Christ)—for Hannah's burden was for the glory of the Lord among His people.]

- 11] And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.

The story of Hannah and Elkanah concludes with a single paragraph. Each year the two returned to the tabernacle to worship, bringing Samuel new clothes. But they did not come alone. God had opened Hannah's womb, and she bore three additional sons and two daughters. What a wonderful reminder. It is impossible for us to out-give God.

As for Samuel, the boy ministered before the Lord and was cared for by Eli the priest.

## Eli—a Careless Father (2:12–36)

While Eli himself was a dedicated and righteous man, his sons "had no regard for the Lord" (v. 12). This passage catalogs their sins as both ritual and moral:

**Ritually** they violated regulations in the Law concerning the sacrifices that signified God's acceptance of sinners. In this they treated the Lord's offering with contempt, a very great sin in God's sight.

**Morally** they were just as corrupt, quick to commit adultery, and ready to use violence as were the people that, as priests, they were called to serve.

While Eli rebuked his sons, they paid no attention. And Eli did no more than rebuke them. He did not even strip them of their priesthood, the least he might have done. As a result God sent a prophet to announce His judgment. The prophet outlined a series of tragic events that would take place "because you scorn My sacrifice and offering" and "honor your sons more than Me" (v. 29). No one in Eli's family line would grow old: his descendants would die in the prime of life. In the place of Eli and his line God would raise up "a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in My heart and mind" (v. 35). [Ultimately that faithful Priest is Jesus, who fulfills in Himself all that the Old Testament priesthood merely signified.]

In the immediate context, however, Samuel, whose primary role was as a judge and prophet, did serve as a priest. And in the course of history the high priestly role was shifted from Eli's family line to another branch of Aaron's family (cf. 1 Kgs 2:27, 35).]

How tragic when a servant of the Lord (and a high priest at that) fails to win his own sons to the Lord! These sons of Eli were selfish, for they put their own desires ahead of the Word of God and the needs of the people; they were overbearing; and they were lustful (2:22). Philippians 3:17–19 is a perfect description of these ungodly priests. Note the repetition of the word *flesh*. Note too the contrast between Eli's sons and young Samuel in v. 18: "But Samuel..." No doubt Eli's sons laughed at young Samuel and ridiculed him for his faithful ministry; but God was going to step in and settle accounts before long.

- 12] Now the sons of Eli *were* sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.
- 13] And the priests' custom with the people *was, that*, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand;
- 14] And he struck *it* into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.
- 15] Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.
- 16] And *if* any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and *then* take *as much* as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, *Nay*; but thou shalt give *it me* now: and if not, I will take *it* by force.
- 17] Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.
- 18] But Samuel ministered before the LORD, *being* a child, girded with a linen ephod.
- 19] Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought *it* to him from year to

- year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.
- 20] And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home.
- 21] And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

### Eli's Selfish Disobedience (vv. 22–26).

Eli refused to face facts honestly and obey the Word of God; see Deut. 21:18–21 and 17:12. In 3:13 God states clearly that Eli refused to restrain his sons; instead, he pampered them. His weak warning in 2:23–25 was certainly no substitute for definite discipline. Compare 2:26 with Luke 2:52.

- 22] Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
- 23] And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.
- 24] Nay, my sons; for *it is* no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD'S people to transgress.
- 25] If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.
- 26] And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.

### His Severe Judgment (vv. 27–36).

God in His grace sent a severe message to Eli by the mouth of an unknown man of God, warning him that his family would suffer because of the sins of his sons and because of his own carelessness. He honored his sons above the Lord (v. 29); this was idolatry. Eli had not been jealous for the glory of the Lord, so God had to remove him.

In later years, Saul killed many of Eli's descendants (1 Sam 22:17–20); and later Solomon replaced Eli's family with the family of Zadok: the priesthood was taken from Abiathar, descendant of Aaron's son Ithamar, and given to Zadok, descendant of Aaron's son Eleazar (1 Kgs 2:27, 35). Of course, the "faithful priest" of v. 35 refers immediately to Samuel, but ultimately to Christ. Verse 34 predicts the death of Eli's two sons; see 4:17–18 for the fulfillment.

- 27] And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?
- 28] And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel *to be* my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?
- 29] Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded *in my habitation*; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?
- 30] Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed *that* thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.
- 31] Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.
- 32] And thou shalt see an enemy *in my habitation*, in all *the wealth* which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.
- 33] And the man of thine, *whom* I shall not cut off from mine altar, *shall be* to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.
- 34] And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them.
- 35] And I will raise me up a faithful priest, *that* shall do according to *that* which *is* in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.
- 36] And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left in thine house shall come *and* crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

## 1 Samuel 3 Samuel—A Devoted Son

### His Call from the Lord (vv. 1–14).

- 1] And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was* no open vision.

Tradition states that Samuel was about twelve years old at this time. He had grown up in the presence of the Lord and learned to serve in His tabernacle, yet he did not have a personal experience with the Lord (v. 7). How important it is for those who are raised in Christian homes to make their own personal decisions for Christ. Samuel had filled the lampstand with oil; it was close to daybreak and the lamp was about to go out. Samuel was sleeping and the Lord called him. He first thought was that blind Eli needed his help, so he ran to him. (See how quick this boy was



to obey when called.) Verse 10 (NKJV) records Samuel's conversation: "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears." Later on, God would say to Samuel, "Speak servant, for your Lord hears!" For Samuel became a great man of prayer.

- 2] And it came to pass at that time, when Eli *was* laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, *that* he could not see;
- 3] And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God *was*, and Samuel was laid down *to sleep*;
- 4] That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here *am* I.
- 5] And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.
- 6] And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.
- 7] Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.
- 8] And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.
- 9] Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.
- 10] And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

The person who surrenders to the Lord and is willing to listen will always learn God's will. Eli had disobeyed the Lord and put his family first, so God could not speak directly to him.

It was a message of judgment on Eli's house, and it must have weighed heavily upon Samuel's heart. Samuel loved Eli and had learned much from him, but Samuel knew he must be true to the Lord in spite of his personal desires.

- 11] And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.
- 12] In that day I will perform against Eli all *things* which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.
- 13] For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.
- 14] And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

## His Message to Eli

This tremendous spiritual experience did not keep Samuel from doing his daily tasks the next morning. He did not "parade" himself before the people; no, he walked in great humility, carrying within his heart the burden of the Lord. Just as he had said "Here am I" to the Lord, so he replied "Here am I" when Eli called him. Those who honor the Lord will also honor their elders. Samuel would rather keep the sad message in his own heart, but Eli asked him to tell him all; so he did. While we do not admire Eli's failure with his own family, we do admire his resignation to God's will even though it meant death to him and his sons.

Eli himself lived for a short time thereafter, and indeed the priesthood continued in his family for three more generations. This is clear from 14:3—Ahijah served as priest to King Saul. He is identified as the great-grandson of Eli through Phinehas and Ahitub. The prophecy to Samuel came to pass fully when Abiathar, son of Ahijah (the same as Ahimelech of 22:9-12), was apparently replaced by King David with Zadok after Abiathar sided with Adonijah against Solomon (1 Kgs 1:7-8; 2:27, 35). Thus the time between prophecy and fulfillment was more than 130 years. Yet it did come to pass and the priesthood switched to Zadok, a descendant of Aaron's son Eleazar, and it remained with his offspring throughout Israel's subsequent history.

This event was a turning point in history. Up to now, God had not spoken to the people in frequent or widespread ("open") visions (v. 1); but now everyone knew that Samuel was God's prophet and that the Lord was with him. The Lord was now able to appear once again because *there was a servant whom He could trust*. Certainly God would do more for His people even today if He could find devoted believers willing to be His servants.

- 15] And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.
- 16] Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here *am* I.
- 17] And he said, What *is* the thing that *the LORD* hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide *it* not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide *any* thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.
- 18] And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, *It is* the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.
- 19] And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

- 20] And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel *was* established to be a prophet of the LORD.
- 21] And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

## Lessons:

1. Never underestimate the **power of sin** in a family. Eli's sons needed discipline, but he pampered them instead. This cost him his life, and eventually cost the family the priesthood.
2. Never underestimate the **power of prayer** in a home. Hannah and Elkanah were people of prayer, and God answered their prayers. We are blessed today because of the dedication of Hannah, for through her, God gave the world Samuel, the last of the judges and the first of the national prophets.
3. **God speaks to children and young people**, and adults should make it easy for them to hear God's voice and respond in faith. How wise Eli was to know that God was calling young Samuel. The training of children in spiritual things is a great responsibility that we must not neglect.

\* \* \*

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) How would you describe Hannah's emotional/mental state? What was the main cause of her condition?
- 2) Why are the "justified hurts" the most dangerous?
- 3) What other factors contributed to make her condition seem even worse?
- 4) What evidences of God's love was Hannah given, but was unable to recognize?
- 5) What characterized Hannah's prayer?

## Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) Do godly parents always produce godly children? It's clear that Eli failed with his sons. But ironically Samuel also had a similar failure! We will read in 1 Samuel 8: 1-3 that Samuel appointed his grown sons judges, but that they "turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice." Samuel personally was a godly person, dedicated to God from his childhood. How do we explain his failure with his sons?
- 2) Explore this theme by evaluating the following possible explanations:
  - 1) Busy parents don't give enough time to their children.
  - 2) Godliness in parents is not attractive to children.
  - 3) Godly parents expect too much of their children and turn them away.
  - 4) Godly parents are a good influence but influence cannot determine what a person will become.
  - 5) Children, like parents, have to make their own spiritual commitments.

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

Explore one or more of the following topics:

Priesthood: Leviticus 9-10.

Ephod: Exodus 28-29.

Prophet: Deuteronomy 18.

Offerings: Leviticus 1-7.

Appearance of God to man: Leviticus 9-10.

Guilt: Leviticus 1-7.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read 1 Samuel 4-7. This, in my opinion, is one of the most amusing episodes in the Bible.

### Notes:

1. See our book, *The Way of Agape*, for a practical guidebook to this entire area.

## Session 2

### 1 Samuel 4 - 6

- 1] And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

The Philistines were a sea people who settled along the Mediterranean coast around 1200 B.C. They established five major cities, from which they spread inland. These people maintained a military advantage from the time of Samson until the age of David. This was due to the fact that they alone in the area knew the secret of working iron. Their iron weapons were far superior to any weapons of the poverty-stricken Israelites.

“Aphek”: A city about 25 miles west of Shiloh.

- 2] And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

Humanly speaking, war with the Philistines could only bring disaster. It’s no wonder that, in the first battle mentioned in this section, Israel was defeated with about 4,000 men killed on the battlefield.

- 3] And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

Israel’s response was to bring the ark of the covenant into battle. This ark was to be kept in the tabernacle, the tent which served as Israel’s worship center.

The ark *did* represent the presence of the LORD in battle (Num 10:35; Josh 6:6) but only when the people carried it in faith and by divine leading. Even the Philistines were terrified when they knew the ark was in the camp of Israel, for they had heard about its association with Israel’s mighty gods who had brought that people out of Egypt more than 300 years before.

But in sending for the ark, the Israelites lost sight of its true meaning. They wanted the ark to serve as a magical talisman. Somehow God’s

presence was thought of as tied to the ark. If the ark were with them in battle, God must be with them as well. The ark, rather than symbolizing the holiness of God, was to manipulate God into sending a battlefield victory. For, if Israel lost, the ark would be lost! This was a blatant attempt to manipulate God!

- 4] So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth *between* the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God.

“which dwelleth *between* [above] the cherubims”: a frequent identifier of the Living God. (The “s” is redundant: the “im” implies the plural.) [See our briefing package, *The Seat of Mercy*, for some provocative aspects of the Mercy Seat and the ark in a prophetic perspective.]

- 5] And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

Israel lost 4,000 men in the first battle, and this should have been evidence to them that God was displeased. Did they repent and turn to God in prayer and confession? No! Instead they resorted to superstition and took the ark of the covenant to the battlefield.

They could not take the ark out in faith because God had not commanded them by His Word. They were acting by chance and not by faith. Because the ark had gone before the nation in the wilderness and had marched in victory around Jericho, they thought its presence would assure them victory over the Philistines. Instead of revering the ark as the symbol of God’s presence, they turned it into a religious relic! See Num 10:35ff. Israel’s act also revealed a *pagan* view of God. When the Philistines heard Israel shouting gladly when the ark was brought into their camp, these pagan peoples said “a god [had] come into the camp.”

How tragic that Israel had no more spiritual perception than the idolatrous Philistines. Neither saw beyond the symbol to realize that God is God of the whole earth, whose presence cannot be captured in any material object. And how revealing that Israel thought God could be manipulated by placing His ark in their vanguard.

- 6] And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What *meaneth* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

- 7] And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.

- 8] Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these *are* the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.
- 9] Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.
- 10] And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen.

The Philistines were first afraid, then determined; even if the God of Israel were in the camp, they were going to behave like brave soldiers! (Since God had forsaken His people, the Philistines had an easy victory.)

[Psalm 78:56ff is a vivid description of this tragedy.]

Israel should have known that God's presence with them depended upon their obedience to His Word. Hophni and Phinehas were ungodly priests; their presence brought judgment, not blessing.

- 11] And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.
- 12] And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.
- 13] And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told *it*, all the city cried out.

Eli, the ninety-eight-year-old blind priest, was sitting by the wayside when the messenger arrived at Shiloh with the sad news; but the messenger ran right past him and announced his message to the city. The uproar in the city aroused Eli's curiosity, for no doubt he was expecting the fulfillment of Samuel's prophecy (3:11–14; 2:34–35).

The safety of the ark had been Eli's greatest concern. Now we see sorrow upon sorrow: Eli falls down in a state of shock, breaks his neck, and dies; and his daughter-in-law likewise loses her life as she delivers a son.

- 14] And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.
- 15] Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.
- 16] And the man said unto Eli, I *am* he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?
- 17] And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

Note how the messenger gives the four pieces of bad news in order of their importance:

- 1) Israel is fled;
- 2) Many have been slaughtered;
- 3) Eli's two sons are dead; and
- 4) The ark has been captured by the enemy.

- 18] And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.
- 19] And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, *near* to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her.
- 20] And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard *it*.
- 21] And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband.

The name "Ichabod" means "no glory" or "Where is the glory?" See Ex 40:34ff. The word "departed" may be translated "gone into exile." Israel's history is a story of receiving and then losing the glory of God.

- 22] And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

To the pagans it was conceivable that gods could be taken into exile (Isa 46:1-2), but the Israelites should have known that their omnipresent God could not be taken away from them. How heathen Israel's perception of God had become!

The next events teach us that the God who cannot be manipulated *will* be honored as holy.

## 1 Samuel 5

- 1] And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.
- 2] When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.
- 3] And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.
- 4] And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon

and both the palms of his hands *were* cut off upon the threshold; only *the stump of Dagon* was left to him.

- 5] Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day

The word translated “threshold” (מִפְתָּן *miphtan*) may also, and perhaps ought to, be understood as the pedestal on which the idol stood. So embarrassed were the Philistines over this misfortune of their god that they forever after refused to set foot on the scene of his calamity.

- 6] But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, *even* Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

The Lord sent a plague on the inhabitants of Ashdod which was evidently carried by mice (“rats,” NIV; 6:4-5) and also caused painful growths to erupt on their bodies. The Hebrew *‘ophel* indicates a hemorrhoid-like condition in the rectal area, as suggested in many versions.<sup>1</sup>

(*o’pel*) Emerods (ASV, “emerods”; NASB, “hemorrhoids”; NIV “tumors”): A noun occurring six times, five in I Sam 5–6; *o’pel* refers to boils or tumors (cf. Arabic “tumor,” boil of the anus or vulva).

## עֹפֵל ‘ophel

In all instances in the OT it is replaced by the *Qere tehor*, (q.v.), apparently regarded as a more delicate euphemism by the Sopherim. I (*tehor*) **hemorrhoid, tumor**. (ASV similar; RSV employs “ulcer” in Deut 28:27 [H26].

A swelling or tumor. UT, 19: no. 1034 gives no meaning. *tehor* (always plural) is the *Qere* reading for *ophel* six times; *tehor* is employed outright twice (I Sam 6:11, 17). The verbal root is not found in Hebrew, but it means “eject” in Arabic and “strain at stool” in Aramaic (BDB).

*tehor*, as the *Qere* reading, was probably employed as a euphemism for *opel* by the Masoretes. Deuteronomy 28:27 relates *opel* to the general term “boils” or “eruptions,” and to other skin diseases—scurvy and itch. These are physical disorders which Yahweh will bring upon Israel in judgment for disobedience to the Mosaic covenant.

In Deut 28:27 (in the “cursings” formula) Israel is threatened with loathsome diseases of the skin including *o’pel*.

This could be the first time in history when the bubonic plague (characterized by swellings, especially in the lymph glands of groin and armpits) was observed to be associated with rodents.

- 7] And when the men of Ashdod saw that *it was* so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.
- 8] They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about *thither*.
- 9] And it was *so*, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.
- 10] Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.
- 11] So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.
- 12] And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

God will not reveal His power on behalf of His sinning people, but He will not allow His glory to be mocked or His Name to be defiled by a smirking enemy. [This should be of concern to us here in America!]

The lords of the Philistines added the ark to their other religious relics in their heathen temple and put Jehovah on the same level as their fish-god Dagon. Of course, God stands high above all other gods! No wonder the heathen idol fell on its face before the ark! See Isa 19:1. The men put Dagon back on his feet because he was powerless to help himself; but the next day they found their beloved idol without hands and head!

Jehovah had proved Dagon to be a false god; He had vindicated His Name. Dagon lost his hands, but the hand of the Lord was heavy in judgment upon Ashdod (v. 6); God sent “emerods,” and mice (6:4) to plague the people. The ark was then moved from Ashdod to Ekron, but the citizens there begged to have it removed! Once again, God defended His name.



# 1 Samuel 6

- 1] And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

The Philistines decided to return the ark to Israel, but nobody had the courage to undertake the task.

- 2] And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.  
3] And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.  
4] Then said they, What *shall be* the trespass offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, *according to* the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague *was* on you all, and on your lords.  
5] Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land.

[The mice (rats) I can visualize; but I can't help but wonder who served as a model for the images of the hemorrhoids?...] ]

- 6] Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?  
7] Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them:  
8] And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him *for* a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go.  
9] And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, *then* he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that *it is* not his hand *that* smote us: it *was* a chance *that* happened to us.

They finally decided to put the ark on a new cart and allow the cows to walk down the road unassisted. It would be natural for the cows to seek out their calves (v. 10); but if they headed instead for Bethshemesh, it would be evidence that God was directing them and therefore that He had sent the plagues. The Philistines added a trespass offering too: five images of the “emerods,” and five images of the mice.

- 10] And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home:

- 11] And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods.  
12] And the kine took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh, *and* went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside *to* the right hand or *to* the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Bethshemesh.  
13] And *they of* Bethshemesh *were* reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see *it*.  
14] And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite, and stood there, where *there was* a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD.  
15] And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that *was* with it, wherein the jewels of gold *were*, and put *them* on the great stone: and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD.  
16] And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen *it*, they returned to Ekron the same day.  
17] And these *are* the golden emerods which the Philistines returned *for* a trespass offering unto the LORD; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one;  
18] And the golden mice, *according to* the number of all the cities of the Philistines *belonging to* the five lords, *both of* fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great *stone of* Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: *which stone remaineth* unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Bethshemite.  
19] And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten *many* of the people with a great slaughter.

God directed the cows and they brought the cart to the field of Joshua, an inhabitant of Bethshemesh. The Israelites in the harvest field rejoiced to see the ark returned. However, they became curious and looked into the ark (vv. 19–20), and God had to judge them.

The numbers in v. 19 have created a problem, for there were not 50,000 people in that little village. In Hebrew, letters are used for numbers, and it is easy for a scribe to miscopy or misread a letter. It is likely that seventy men were judged instantly, certainly a “great slaughter” for such a small village. The problem does not affect anything crucial. It is important that we know God did judge their sin. How many were slain is not a vital matter.

- 20] And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us?  
21] And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, *and* fetch it up to you.



Hophni and Phinehas thought they could win victories by trusting the ark when their lives were wicked, and God killed them. Eli died because he had not disciplined his own sons who were dishonoring the Lord. The Philistines died because they treated Jehovah like one of their own gods. The men of Bethshemesh died because they presumptuously looked into the ark.

It does not pay to trifle with God.

The Philistines were healed. And the people of Israel rejoiced. But some of the Israelite men peeked curiously into the ark. God struck them down, killing 70. The people of Israel still were not sensitive to the holiness of God.

## Summary

This three-chapter section of 1 Samuel records a painful lesson God taught to His people Israel, and through them teaches to us. Israel had failed to treat God with respect. Even Eli permitted his own sons to defile the priesthood. The people tried to manipulate God by bringing the ark to the battlefield “so that it may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies” (4:3). This basically pagan view of the ark failed to sense that it was a symbol, pointing to God, but with no magical or divine power in itself.

Yet the ark was associated with God. It had been set apart to God, and as such was a holy thing. The Philistines discovered that Israel’s God was supreme when He judged them and their god for treating the ark as a victory trophy. And when God’s own people failed to show respect for the holy, they too were struck down.

Why? Because Israel desperately needed to recover a sense of the holiness and the power of God. Only when the people of God honored Him again could He bring His people blessing.

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## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) Who were the Philistines? Why did the Romans name this land “Palestine” in the first century?

- 2) In what ways was Israel’s view of the Ark, in these chapters, *pagan*?

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) In what ways are our own errors parallel to Israel’s in these chapters?
- 2) What is the lesson of the tragedy at Beth Shemesh for us today?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Trace the apparent travels of the Ark from the Exodus until it disappears in the days of Josiah.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read 1 Samuel 8-15: The Life of Saul, Israel’s 1<sup>st</sup> King

### Notes:

1. C. D. Ginsberg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* [Reprint, KTAV, 1966, p. 346].

## Session 3 1 Samuel 7, 8, 9

- 1] And the men of Kirjath Jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.

“Kiriath Jearim”: “the city of woods,” also Kirjath-baal (Josh 15:60; 18:14; 1Chr 13:5, 6). It was the nearest town to Beth-shemesh and stood on a hill. This was the reason of the message (1Sam 6:21), and why this was chosen for the convenience of people turning their faces to the ark (1Kgs 8:29–35; Ps 28:2; Dan 6:10).

The return of the ark to Kiriath Jearim seemed to be a tangible sign that God was once again among His people to bless them and deliver them

from all their oppressors. The mere presence of the ark did not guarantee God's favor, however, as Israel had learned at the battle of Aphek. Rather, it was submission to the God of the ark that was essential (v. 4). The ark was not returned to Shiloh; it remained at the house of Abinadab for twenty years. What was God doing during this time? He was preparing His servant Samuel to defeat the enemy and establish the kingdom.

- 2] And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath Jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

After the ark was at Kiriath Jearim for 20 years, Samuel addressed the Israelites (v. 3). In other words, the ark was in Kiriath Jearim for 20 years before Samuel undertook his first recorded public ministry. In actual fact the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim for about 100 years. It was taken there just after the battle of Aphek (1104 B.C.) and remained until David brought it from there to Jerusalem in his first year as king over *all* Israel (1003 B.C.; see 2 Sam 5:5; 6:1-11).

- 3] And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, *then* put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

After these 20 long years with the ark at Kiriath Jearim, Samuel challenged the people of Israel to prove their loyalty to the Lord by abandoning their foreign gods and turning to the Lord only. This meant putting away the gods of the heathen, and then preparing their hearts to serve the Lord.

How tragic that the great nation of Israel had fallen into defeat and disrepute because of their sins! Had Eli been a faithful father and his sons faithful priests, this defeat might never have occurred.

- 4] Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.

The plural Baals and Ashtoreths (Ashtaroth; the Hebrew plural of Ashtoreth) describe the many local shrines of those Canaanite nature deities. Baal, variously identified as son of El (chief of the Canaanite pantheon) or as son of Dagon (the Mesopotamian deity), was particularly recognized as the god of thunder and rain whose task was to make the earth fertile annually.

Ashtoreth (or Astarte) was goddess of both love and war, as were her Babylonian and Greek counterparts Ishtar and Aphrodite respectively. She apparently functioned with Baal as a fertility deity and by their sexual union in some magical way the earth and all its life supposedly experienced annual rejuvenation and fruitfulness. Hence, rites of a most licentious character were associated with her worship.

- 5] And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

Samuel could be dubbed "God's 9-1-1 Man," and the name surely fits. He stepped on the scene:

- when the priesthood was decayed,
- when the nation was defeated, and
- when God's glory had departed.

Samuel summoned the nation to Mizpeh for a prayer meeting.

Samuel was always be associated with prayer; see 12:23.

- he was born in answer to his mother's prayers (chap. 1);
- he prayed for his nation and defeated the enemy (7:13);
- he prayed when Israel defied the Lord and asked for a king (8:6); and
- he prayed for King Saul (15:11) even after God had rejected him.

Certainly Hannah must have realized how wonderfully God would use her son; review her song (and prediction) in 2:9-10.

- 6] And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured *it* out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

Mizpeh was the meeting place of the national assembly on several other important occasions:

- when the elders of the tribes gathered there to decide Benjamin's fate following the murder of a Levite's concubine (Judg 19:1-20:1, 3; 21:1, 5, 8);
- when Saul was presented to Israel as king (1Sam 10:17);
- it was even the capital of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (2 Kgs 25:23, 25).

(Two locations have been suggested: *Nebi Samwil*, a height about seven miles north of Jerusalem, the traditional residence of Gedaliah, the governor of Judah appointed by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 25:23), and the

scene of another day of national humiliation under Judas the Maccabee (I Macc 3:44ff.); and Mount Scopus, the broad ridge immediately northeast of Jerusalem, because of the similarity of meaning between Mizpeh—watch tower, and Scopus—watchman.)

The pouring of water as a sign of penitence is attested only in this passage. The nearest parallel was the pouring out of water from the pool of Siloam within the temple area on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles in memory of the gift of water from the rock in the Exodus. (This rock seems to have been found at *Jabal Al Lawz* in Arabia.)<sup>1</sup>

- 7] And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard *it*, they were afraid of the Philistines.
- 8] And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.
- 9] And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered *it for* a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

Samuel next summoned the people to Mizpah, and there prayed for them and offered sacrifice to the Lord on their behalf.

- 10] And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

When the Philistines learned of the assembly, they attacked Israel at Mizpah but the Lord, in a mighty demonstration of power (by thunder), defeated them.

- 11] And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until *they came* under Bethcar.
- 12] Then Samuel took a stone, and set *it* between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

In commemoration of this great triumph Samuel erected on the site between Mizpah and Shen (whose location is unknown), a monument which he called Ebenezer, literally, the “stone of [God’s] help.”

This apparently ended Philistine occupation of Israelite soil though the Philistines came later time and time again to harass Israel (13:5; etc.).

The events at Mizpeh were these:

- 1) Samuel poured out water before the Lord as a symbol of the nation’s repentance, their hearts poured out in sorrow for their sins;
- 2) He offered a burnt offering to indicate Israel’s complete dedication to God;
- 3) He prayed for the nation while they were fearing the arrival of the Philistines; God gave the army of Israel a great victory.

[What a day that was! *Samuel accomplished with one prayer a victory that Samson could not win during the entire twenty years of his leadership!*]

- 13] So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

From that day on (until David’s great victory over the Philistines), their enemy kept their distance. Such is the power of a dedicated life, the power of prayer (James 5:16).

- 14] And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

Amorites refers to the hill-dwellers of southern Canaan (see Num 13:29; Josh 10:5). In several passages in the Bible the name Amorite (Westerner) is used loosely of the original inhabitants of Canaan in general. Hammurabi was a famous Amorite.<sup>2</sup>

- 15] And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.
- 16] And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

After the destruction of Shiloh, Gilgal seems to have become one of the principal centers of the religious and civil life of the nation. There Samuel held his sessions, the national assembly was convened (11:14), and the army was mustered (13:4). The remoteness of this place from the Philistines may have been one of the reasons for the choice.

- 17] And his return *was* to Ramah; for there *was* his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

After the battle of Ebenezer (7:12), about 1084 B.C. (see comments on 7:2), the nation of Israel was content to follow Samuel’s leadership for the next

30 years or so. Samuel had a ministry as prophet and judge, traveling from city to city to minister to the people and settle their disputes. He was the last of the judges and the first of the national prophets. Thereafter Samuel continued to judge in a circuit (approx. 50 miles in circumference) including Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, and his hometown, Ramah. Thus the stage was set for an encounter between Samuel and the people.

## 1 Samuel 8

- 1] And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.
- 2] Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: *they were* judges in Beersheba.
- 3] And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

Samuel's sons, who had been serving as judges at Beersheba in Judah, no doubt reminded Israel of the sons of Eli (2:12, 22). Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah were dishonest judges, accepting bribes and perverting, rather than upholding, justice. It is sad to see that Samuel's sons did not follow in their father's godly walk (8:5). Perhaps he was too busy with the affairs of the nation to train them. Eli had made a similar mistake.

These events show us the importance of a godly home. The nation fell into sin and defeat because Eli had neglected his home; but God saved the nation because of the prayers of a godly mother (Hannah) and her God-given son. As go the homes, so goes the nation.

- 4] Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

Probably the people were afraid that they might return to the wicked days the nation had known before Samuel had been raised up by the Lord.

- 5] And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

Shortly before 1051 B.C., the year Saul became king (when Samuel was 65-70 years old), the people of Israel, aware of Samuel's advanced age and of the wickedness of his sons, demanded of the prophet that he select a king to rule over them. Jehovah God had been King of Israel and had cared for the nation since its beginning, but now the elders of the nation wanted a king to lead them.

Israel had made abortive attempts to establish a human monarchy during the days of the Judges (see Judg 8:22-23; 9), actions contrary to the theocratic ideal of the kingship of the Lord Himself. But when Samuel had grown old and it appeared he would not live much longer, the people again expressed the desire for a king.

God had such a king in mind, one who would be raised up and identified in His own good time (Deut 17:14-15; *predicted from the line of David in the closing chapter of Ruth!*); but that time had not yet come.

Samuel, of course, was grieved that they should seek a king, for God, who had redeemed them from Egypt to be His people, was their King.

The institution of the monarchy also involved the separation of the civil from the religious leadership. And this in turn meant that Israel now began to have a political history independent of her religious history, and therefore, of her true calling.

- 6] But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

Samuel's reaction to their request shows that he fully understood their unbelief and rebellion: they were rejecting Jehovah.

- 7] And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.
- 8] According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.
- 9] Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

The request for a human king was not in itself improper, for God had promised such a leader (review our notes on Ruth 4). But the refusal to wait for God's timing was clearly displeasing to the Lord and to His prophet.

In the face of impending conflict with the Ammonites (see 12:12-13) the people wanted a king "such as all the other nations have" (8:5). Even after witnessing the leadership of the Lord in stunning victory over the Philistines at Ebenezer, Israel demanded a fallible, human leader.

10] And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

Here is an illustration of God's permissive will: He granted them their request, but He warned them of the cost.

- 11] And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots.
- 12] And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and *will set them* to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.
- 13] And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers.
- 14] And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, *even* the best *of them*, and give *them* to his servants.
- 15] And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

This is the only reference in the OT to the exaction of tithes by the king.

- 16] And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work.
- 17] He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.
- 18] And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

Note Moses' prophecy of this event:

*When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.*

Deut 17:14–20

Samuel told the people God would give them what they wanted, but the king would be a despot, a demanding dictator who would enrich himself at the people's expense. He would press them into his military and domestic enterprises (vv. 11-13, 16, 17). He would appropriate their properties to his own use (vv. 14, 16) and would inflict heavy taxes on them (vv. 15, 17). And when all this happened it would be too late to complain, for the people would have reaped the consequences of their own fleshly desires (v.18).

Shortly after Saul ascended the throne many of these predictions came to pass (14:52) and continued to mark the long history of the monarchy in both Israel and Judah (2 Sam 15:1; 1 Kgs 12:12-15; 21:7).

- 19] Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;
- 20] That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

Their request was motivated by several factors:

- 1) Samuel's sons were not godly and the elders feared that they would lead the nation astray when Samuel died;
  - 2) The nation had been through a series of temporary leaders during the period of the Judges, and the elders wanted a more permanent ruler; and
  - 3) Israel wanted to be like the other nations and have a king to honor. The powerful nations around Israel were a constant threat, and the elders felt that a king would give them greater security.
- 21] And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.
- 22] And the LORD said to Samuel, Harken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

## 1 Samuel 9

Chapter 9 explains how Saul was brought to Samuel and privately anointed for the kingship.

- 1] Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.



- 2] And he had a son, whose name *was* Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly; and *there was* not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward *he was* higher than any of the people.

Saul also occurs as the name:

- a) of an Edomite prince (Gen 36:37, 38);
- b) of a son of Simeon (Gen 46:10);
- c) of a Kohathite Levite (I Chr 6:24):
- d) and, in the NT, of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 7:58), also a man of Benjamin.

He was a tall and striking Benjamite (9:1) who appeared quite naive and unkingly in many ways. He hailed from the town of Gibeah (10:26), where the concubine of a Levite who had sought hospitality was raped and killed (Judg 19). Excavations at Tel el-Ful, just three miles north of Jerusalem, have established it as the site of ancient Gibeah.

- 3] And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.
- 4] And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found *them* not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and *there they were* not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found *them* not.
- 5] *And* when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that *was* with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave *caring* for the asses, and take thought for us.

On the mission to find some lost donkeys belonging to his father Kish, Saul approached the region of Zuph (in the hill country of Ephraim; cf. 1:1, the home of Samuel).

- 6] And he said unto him, Behold now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he is* an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.

It occurred to Saul's servant that since Samuel was a seer he could help find the animals. In Saul's day a prophet was known primarily as a seer (רֹאֵה *ra'ah*) undoubtedly because the major thrust of his ministry was associated with receiving divine revelation, even in matters as mundane as finding lost animals. Later prophets served more as proclaimers of revelation, spokesmen for God (נְבִיא *nabiy'*), though of course all prophets were both seers and proclaimers. Samuel, for example, was expressly described by both terms (9:11; 3:20).

- 7] Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, *if* we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and *there is* not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?
- 8] And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: *that* will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way.
- 9] (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for *he that is* now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.)
- 10] Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God *was*.
- 11] *And* as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here?
- 12] And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, *he is* before you: make haste now, for he came to day to the city; for *there is* a sacrifice of the people to day in the high place:
- 13] As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; *and* afterwards they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him.
- 14] And they went up into the city: *and* when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place.
- 15] Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,
- 16] To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him *to be* captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

“Captain”: שָׂר *sar* prince, ruler, leader, chief, chieftain, official, captain. Is here indicating king. [Cf. Josh 5:14, 15, where the Lord Jesus leads the battle of Jericho!]

- 17] And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people.

Though a son of Kish, a man of some influence (1 Sam 9:1), Saul had little to commend him to the high position of king except his physical impressiveness (9:2). God had to convince both Saul and the people that he was the proper candidate.

This does not mean that Saul satisfied God's ultimate requirements but only that He was graciously letting the people have their own way. When the two met (by God's providential control), Samuel not only put Saul's mind at ease concerning the lost beasts but also told him that he was God's choice for king (v. 20).



- 18] Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house *is*.
- 19] And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I *am* the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that *is* in thine heart.
- 20] And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom *is* all the desire of Israel? *Is it* not on thee, and on all thy father's house?
- 21] And Saul answered and said, *Am* not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

Astounded, Saul could only reply that he was unworthy of this high honor. The transparency and humility of Saul are evident at this stage of his career.

- 22] And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which *were* about thirty persons.

Samuel then invited Saul to sit with him as guest of honor at the sacrificial feast (vv. 22-24) and then to spend the night in his home in the town below.

- 23] And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee.
- 24] And the cook took up the shoulder, and *that* which *was* upon it, and set *it* before Saul. And *Samuel* said, Behold that which is left! set *it* before thee, *and* eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.
- 25] And when they were come down from the high place into the city, *Samuel* communed with Saul upon the top of the house.

Next morning Samuel detained him so that he might communicate with him alone (with Saul's servant going on ahead) the revelation of God about his selection as king (vv. 25-27).

- 26] And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.
- 27] *And* as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.

Saul had everything in his favor:

- 1) a strong body, 10:23;
- 2) a humble mind, 9:21;
- 3) a new heart, 10:9;
- 4) spiritual power, 10:10;
- 5) loyal friends, 10:26; and most of all,
- 6) the guidance and prayers of Samuel.

Yet in spite of these advantages, he failed miserably. Why? Because he would not allow God to be the Lord of his life.

In choosing Saul, the nation rejected the Father; much later in choosing Barabbas, they rejected the Son; and when they chose their own leaders instead of the witness of the Apostles, they rejected the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51).

\* \* \*

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) In what way could you describe Samuel as God's "911 Man"?
- 2) In what way was Samuel a man of prayer?
- 3) Why did Israel want a king? What was wrong with that?
- 4) Contrast the Saul of the Old Testament with the Saul of the New Testament.
- 5) How could Samuel anoint a member of the tribe of Benjamin when Jacob has predicted that Judah would be the royal tribe, and the Book of Ruth predicted the line of the David?

## Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) Saul began his reign with notable success. What were the qualities that made his success possible?
- 2) Events early in his 40-year reign revealed flaws that had been hidden by the young king's many positive qualities. What were they?

- 3) Compare Samuel's sons with Eli's. Why do some faithful men have unfaithful sons?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Profile the history of Mizpeh throughout the Old Testament.

## Preparation for Next Session

Reach 1 Samuel 10-11.

### Notes:

1. Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*, 1 Sa 7:14 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962).
2. See recent presentations and books by Bob Cornuke of the Base Institute ([www.baseinstitute.org](http://www.baseinstitute.org))

## Session 4 1 Samuel 10, 11, 12

- 1] Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured *it* upon his head, and kissed him, and said, *Is it* not because the LORD hath anointed thee *to be* captain over his inheritance?

As Samuel prepared to reveal God's purposes to Saul, he first anointed him with oil. In the Old Testament, anointing with oil symbolized the setting apart of a person, or even an object, for divine service (Ex 30:23-33). It was also accompanied by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 16:13). When Samuel poured oil on Saul's head, that act represented God's approval of Saul as leader of His people.

- 2] When thou art departed from me to day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?

Samuel gave to Saul a sign the fulfillment of which would confirm the divine nature of his call to kingship. In confirmation to both Saul and

the people of his divine call and commission, Saul was told that he would experience three signs:

- a) he would meet two men near Rachel's tomb at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin and Ephraim, who would tell him of the whereabouts of the lost donkeys;
- b) he would meet three men at the (oak) tree of Tabor (v.3), somewhere between Zelzah and Gibeah, who would give him two loaves of bread; and
- c) he would meet a procession of prophets descending from the high place at Gibeah (v.5).

- 3] Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine:

The oak (AV, *plain*) of Tabor is supposed by some to be identified with the tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel (Judges 4:5).

- 4] And they will salute thee, and give thee two *loaves* of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands.
- 5] After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where *is* the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy:

"The hill of God": Or *the Gibeah of God*. *Gibeah* is used to denote the bald, rounded hills of central Palestine. The Philistine outpost here, just three miles north and east of Jerusalem, shows how deeply the Philistines had penetrated into Israel despite defeats during Samuel's rule. The garrison may be the Philistine officer (13:3) placed in the city to maintain Philistine harmony and to collect tribute.

"Company of prophets": This is the first mention of a prophetic guild in the OT. The main interest of these prophets was to uphold the pure religion of the Lord against any syncretism with the fertility cult of Canaan. Some scholars have felt that Samuel was responsible for introducing the prophetic guilds.

"Psaltery, tabret, harp": The psaltery was an instrument of ten strings, shaped like a wine bottle and played by the fingers. Tabrets were drums or tambourines, usually played by women. The harps were played with

plectra. [“10 Strings” may also be an exotic pun by the Holy Spirit, since the current theories in quantum physics suggest that our basic reality is composed of superstrings vibrating in 10 dimensions. Cf. Psalm 33:2; 92:3; 144:9.]

- 6] And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

Remarkably, Saul would join in with the prophets in their prophesying as the Spirit of God enabled him and he would be changed into a different person. [This is frequently taken to mean that Saul was converted or spiritually regenerated. However, such language for spiritual renewal is foreign to the Old Testament, and Saul’s subsequent attitudes and behavior do not bear out that this was his experience (16:14; 18:12; 28:15-16). However, the Spirit made the inexperienced and unlettered Saul able to assume kingly responsibilities in much the same way as the judges before him were blessed (Judg 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).]

- 7] And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, *that* thou do as occasion serve thee; for God *is* with thee.

God had given Saul three special signs to assure him (10:1-7). Samuel also instructed Saul to tarry at Gilgal and wait for him to come (10:8).

- 8] And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, *and* to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.

Verse 8 should be translated, “When you go before me to Gilgal”—that is, at some future date when King Saul would have the army ready for battle. This event took place some years later; see chap. 13.

- 9] And it was *so*, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

The Spirit of God changed his character into headstrong courage and endowed him with the qualities needed for kingship. (See comments on v.6.)

- 10] And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.  
11] And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What *is* this *that* is come unto the son of Kish? *Is* Saul also among the prophets?

- 12] And one of the same place answered and said, But who *is* their father? Therefore it became a proverb, *Is* Saul also among the prophets?

So amazed were the witnesses to Saul’s dramatic and powerful change of character that they created a proverb which thereafter was quoted to describe a totally unexpected and unexplainable phenomenon: Is Saul also among the prophets?

This does not suggest, of course, that Saul became part of the prophetic ministry led by Samuel, but only that he was able to exercise a prophetic gift, at least on this occasion, though never having received prophetic training.

Further evidence that Saul did not actually become a prophet lies in the stem of the Hebrew verb here: He joined in their prophesying means literally, “He acted like a prophet among them,” that is, to all outward appearances he was a prophet because he was able to enter into their activities.

- 13] And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place.  
14] And Saul’s uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that *they were* no where, we came to Samuel.  
15] And Saul’s uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you.  
16] And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not.

Saul told his uncle about finding the donkeys with Samuel’s help, but Saul said nothing about the kingship. Keep in mind that this was at the beginning of the kingdom when everything was new. Samuel was still the spiritual ruler of the land, and he and Saul were waiting for God’s leading concerning the future of the nation. Without modern means of transportation or communication, it would take months for Saul and Samuel to rally the people

- 17] And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpah;

Sometime later Samuel gathered the leaders of Israel together at Mizpah, a favorite place for assembly in Samuel’s day (cf. 7:5-6).

- 18] And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, *and* of them that oppressed you:  
19] And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your

adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands.

- 20] And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken.

Benjamin was a favorite son of Jacob and the only son of the twelve born in Palestine proper. The temple area was near the territory of Benjamin and Judah.

- 21] When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found.

After reminding them of their foolish insistence on having a king apart from the directive will of God, he set about to demonstrate God's selection of Saul by a process of elimination (10:18-19). By lot or some similar means the choice was made of tribe, that of Benjamin; clan that of Matri; and family, that of Kish (vv. 20-21).

But when Saul was chosen, he was nowhere to be found.

- 22] Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff.

“The stuff”: who said KJV isn't contemporary! Many had come from afar and had brought their own provisions.

- 23] And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

Physical stature seems desirable for leadership. Perhaps it was an aid in war, both offensive and defensive, inasmuch as a tall man makes a good fighter and can easily be seen by those who follow him. Goliath was tall; Xerxes stood out above his men. (Samuel also saw physical qualification in the eldest son of Jesse and was prepared to make him his choice for king.)

- 24] And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that *there is* none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

Literally, *Let the king live!* This expression is still in common use in England.

- 25] Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote *it* in a book, and laid *it* up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.

The manner of the kingdom: As Moses had written the law for the *community* of Israel, so Samuel now wrote the constitution of the theocratic kingdom. This constitution has never been located. It would be interesting to read the rules and regulations set forth by Samuel.

“In a book”: That is, in scroll, not a codex as we are used to. This scroll was deposited in a high place at Mizpeh. Undoubtedly the scroll included the Mosaic regulations for kingship found in Deuteronomy 17:14-17.

- 26] And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.

Probably these were the men who formed Saul's cabinet. They went home with Saul to Gibeah, where from his farm he ruled as a gentleman farmer. The ruins of the estate of Saul, about four miles north of Jerusalem, have been the subject of much excavation. It is possible to see from Gibeah across the valley to Nebi Samuel (Mizpeh), one of the stations for Samuel's ministry.

- 27] But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

Indicative of his unassuming humility were his initial attempts to avoid the glare of publicity (v. 22) and his refusal to be vindictive against those who ridiculed his selection as king (v. 27).

An opposition party formed early. Samuel describes the members as sons of Belial; i.e., “hellions.” Their refusal to present gifts according to custom was ignored by the magnanimous Saul, and his spirit of generosity got him off to a good start.

[However, in the eyes of the Lord, Saul was not qualified. The prophetic word of Jacob was that the scepter (of kingship) would not depart from Judah (Gen 49:10) until the Messiah came. The promised dynasty of kings which would eventually produce the Messiah must originate in Judah. See **Appendix** on this remarkable prophecy.]

Saul as a Benjamite could not, then, meet the basic prerequisite of lineage. This is also confirmed in the prophecy hidden in Ruth 4.

Nonetheless the people had made their demand, and the LORD had acquiesced.

## 1 Samuel 11

Saul's first opportunity came when Nahash threatened the nation.

- 1] Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-Gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

No sooner had Saul begun his rule than a distant but important part of his kingdom was attacked by the Ammonites. The Ammonites, who were related to Israel through Lot (Gen 19:38), lived a Bedouin type life in the territory east of Gilead. The city of Jabesh Gilead is about 25 miles south of the Sea of Galilee, east of the Jordan River.

### Review

Saul's special concern for this community may well lie in possible ancestral ties which he had there. Judges 19-21 records the story of the civil war between Benjamin and the other tribes, which resulted in the annihilation of all but 600 men of Benjamin. With no wives and children it is apparent that the tribe would become extinct. To prevent this the leaders of Israel proposed that the virgin women of any town which had not sent troops to combat Benjamin should be seized and given to these survivors as wives. When it was discovered that Jabesh Gilead had failed in this respect, the 400 virgins of the city were captured and given to the Benjamites. Since Saul was a Benjamite, it is entirely possible that his ancestry sprang in part from Jabesh Gilead.

- 2] And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this *condition* will I make a *covenant* with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it *for* a reproach upon all Israel.

The savage character of the Bedouin Ammonites is attested by Amos 1:13. The loss of the right eye was intended to disable a man for war, since his left eye was usually covered by his shield. Similarly, the amputation of a man's thumbs and great toes (Judg 1:7, 8) was designed to incapacitate him for the use of the bow and to destroy his swiftness of foot.

- 3] And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if *there be* no man to save us, we will come out to thee.
- 4] Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept.
- 5] And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What *aiileth* the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.

In view of the opposition to Saul's election (10:27), some commentators think that he refrained, for the time being, from exercising his rule and went back to farming. It is likely that Saul ruled Israel from the farm as a matter of choice.

When Saul learned of the plight of Jabesh Gilead, a city so hopelessly besieged by the Ammonites that defeat was inevitable, he became enraged (v.6) and set about to raise an army capable of delivering the place.

So confident was Nahash, king of Ammon, that he made a treaty with Jabesh Gilead to the effect that if they surrendered he would pluck out every right eye. If they resisted, Nahash would probably kill them. The Jabesh elders asked for seven days of grace in which to find help. Nahash agreed, to spare the expense of a long and costly siege, assuming that Saul, who did not even have an army, would be powerless to intervene.

- 6] And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.
- 7] And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.

Saul knew how to get their attention! This method of getting the attention of the tribes is remarkably similar to that of the Levite of Ephraim who dissected his concubine's corpse and sent the parts to the various tribes, a part of the story from Judges 19-21 (see comments on Judg 19:27-30).

- 8] And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

(The distinction between Israel and Judah (cf. 1 Sam 15:4; 17:52; 18:16) suggests that 1 Samuel was written—or edited—after the nation was divided in 931 B.C. into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.)



- 9] And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-Gilead, To morrow, by *that time* the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed *it* to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad.
- 10] Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you.
- 11] And it was *so* on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

Saul used the strategem of Gideon (Judg 7:16). With a forced overnight march, he surprised the Ammonites in the early morning hours and threw consternation and confusion into their hosts. After assembling 330,000 soldiers at Bezek, 12 miles west of Jabesh Gilead, Saul marched all night and early in the morning (the last watch was the last third of the night) engaged the Ammonites in battle, and slaughtered them.

- 12] And the people said unto Samuel, Who *is* he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.
- 13] And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.

Certainly this national victory put Saul before the people and established his authority. Some of his associates wanted Saul to kill those Israelites who had opposed his reign (10:27), but Saul showed humility and restraint by giving the glory to the Lord and refusing to take vengeance on others.

- 14] Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.
- 15] And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

After this decisive victory Saul was hailed as a hero and became firmly entrenched in his monarchical role. And he gave the LORD all the glory.

## 1 Samuel 12

This achievement convinced even Samuel that God had His hand on Saul, so the prophet convened another assembly at Gilgal so that the people could reaffirm the kingship.

Samuel reviewed his own ministry and reminded the people that he had been faithful to them and to the Lord. He then reviewed the history of the nation and led the people to see that they had greatly sinned against the Lord by asking for a king. He called for rain to show the people his own faith and the power of God, and the sudden storm in harvest (an unusual event at that time of the year) brought fear to the people.

They admitted their sin and Samuel reassured them of God's grace. They needed to know that their king was not going to save them; it would be their own faithfulness and obedience to the Lord that would assure them of God's blessings. They had made a mistake, but God would overrule if they would obey.

- 1] And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.
- 2] And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons *are* with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.
- 3] Behold, here *I am*: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received *any* bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

Samuel's argument is concerned with his conduct as a judge. A bribe is the price of a life. Normally it means that blood money is offered to the relatives of a murdered man on condition that they forego the right of blood revenge. Here it was a bribe offered to a judge to persuade him to acquit a murderer or to hinder the execution of justice in some manner.

- 4] And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.

Samuel's political and religious life was audited and found to be in good order. (By contrast, flaws had certainly been evident in his sons, 8:3.) His intent was to show that just as he could be trusted in the past so his word for the present and the future could also be accepted with confidence.

- 5] And he said unto them, The LORD *is* witness against you, and his anointed *is* witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, *He is* witness.
- 6] And Samuel said unto the people, *It is* the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.
- 7] Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers.



Righteous acts: those acts whereby he vindicates the helpless in delivering them from their enemies. [It is this same saving power of God, directed against sin rather than against human enemies, of which Paul speaks when he declares that the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel (Rom 1:17).]

- 8] When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.

A critical point had been reached in Israel's history. The people had demanded and had been given a king, contrary to the precise purposes and will of God. And that king had led them to a glorious victory in his very first campaign! Now the question was, "Would Israel see this victory as evidence of God's blessing and give Him the glory, or would they interpret it as a human achievement devoid of divine enablement?"

Samuel anticipated that question and sought to direct the people to a fresh recognition of the sovereignty of God and to the need to worship and praise Him as the Source of all their blessing. He did this first by reminding them of how God had redeemed them from Egypt and brought them into Canaan (vv. 6-8). He then recounted their disobedience under the Judges (vv. 9-11).

- 9] And when they forgat the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

God's abandonment of the people of Israel to their foes is described under the figure of a sale, just as the deliverance of Israel is called redemption or buying back.

"Hazor, Philistines, Moab": These were the three chief oppressors of Israel during the period of the Judges.

- 10] And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee.  
11] And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.

Jerub-Baal was another name for "Gideon," Judg 6:32. (Bedan does not occur in the list of the judges. Bedan and *Barak* are almost identical in

Hebrew. The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic all read *Barak*. Moreover, in Heb 11:32, Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah are named together, as is the case here. In addition, the mention of Sisera in v.9 makes it almost a necessity to read *Barak* here.)

- 12] And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king.  
13] Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.  
14] If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:  
15] But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.  
16] Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes.  
17] *Is it* not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.

Jerome's testimony (that of an eyewitness): "I have seen rain in the end of June, or in July, in Judea, is borne out by modern travelers." But while unseasonable storms have occurred in Palestine, the evidence of divine intervention in this case is seen in the specific timing of the storm.

- 18] So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

Finally Samuel appealed to the LORD to send a sign from heaven both to authenticate his own warnings of judgment and to cause the people to revere the God who had called them and who desired to bless and use them (vv. 16-18).

The Lord reminded them that their insistent demand for a king, though He would grant it, was still an evil request because it was premature and wrongly motivated.

- 19] And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.

When the people witnessed the display of thunder and rain, a phenomenon unheard of in early summer, the time of wheat harvest (v. 17), they

turned to Samuel and asked the prophet to pray that God might forgive their hastiness in seeking a king.

- 20] And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart;
- 21] And turn ye not aside: for *then should ye go* after vain *things*, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they *are* vain.
- 22] For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

In a marvelous manifestation of the grace of God, Samuel related to the people that God would bless them in spite of their wrong choice if they would only be steadfast in their obedience from this point on.

Their past could not be undone but their future was untainted and could be devoted to the Lord (vv. 20-22). **So can ours!**

- 23] Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

Samuel regarded failure to pray for Israel as a personal sin against God. ***Prayer for one's nation remains an obligation for a believer.*** (Centuries later Jeremiah spoke of Samuel as a great man of prayer, Jer 15:1.)

- 24] Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done for you.
- 25] But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

If the people would respond affirmatively, they could expect God's continued blessing on their nation. But if they did not, they could expect the judgment of God on them.

Saul had everything in his favor:

- 1) a strong body, 10:23;
- 2) a humble mind, 9:21;
- 3) a new heart, 10:9;
- 4) spiritual power, 10:10;
- 5) loyal friends, 10:26; and most of all,
- 6) the guidance and prayers of Samuel.

Yet in spite of these advantages, he failed miserably. Why? Because he would not allow God to be the Lord of his life.

## **Addendum:**

### **The Scepter of Judah**

There is another remarkable prophecy—in Genesis—concerning the rulership of the tribe of Judah. In Genesis 49, Jacob prophesied over each of the twelve tribes. Among these seemingly cryptic riddles, the best known one concerns the royal tribe of Judah:

*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

Genesis 49:10

The term “scepter” refers to their tribal identity and the right to apply and enforce Mosaic Laws and adjudicate capital offenses: *jus gladii*. It is significant that even during their 70-year Babylonian captivity (606-537 B.C.) the tribes retained their tribal identity.<sup>1</sup> They retained their own logistics, judges, etc.<sup>2</sup>

The term “Shiloh” was understood by the early rabbis and Talmudic authorities as referring to the Messiah.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Scepter Departs**

In 6-7 A.D., King Herod's son and successor, Herod Archelaus, was dethroned and banished to Vienna, a city in Gaul. Archelaus was the second son of Herod the Great.<sup>4</sup> The older son, Herod Antipater, was murdered by Herod the Great, along with other family members. (It was quipped at the time that it was safer to be a dog in that household than a member of the family!)

Archelaus' mother was a Samaritan (1/4 or less of Jewish blood) and was never accepted. After the death of Herod (4 B.C.?), Archelaus had been placed over Judea as “Entharch” by Caesar Augustus. Broadly rejected, he was removed in 6-7 A.D. He was replaced by a Roman procurator named Caponius. The legal power of the Sanhedrin was immediately restricted and the adjudication of capital cases was lost. This was normal Roman policy.<sup>5</sup>

This transfer of power is mentioned in the Talmud<sup>6</sup> and by Josephus:

*After the death of the procurator Festus, when Albinus was about to succeed him, the high priest Ananius considered it a favorable opportunity to*

assemble the Sanhedrin. He therefore caused James, the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, and several others, to appear before this hastily assembled council, and pronounced upon them the sentence of death by stoning. All the wise men and strict observers of the law who were at Jerusalem expressed their disapprobation of this act... Some even went to Albinus himself, who had departed to Alexandria, to bring this breach of the law under his observation, and to inform him that Aranius had acted illegally in assembling the Sanhedrin without the Roman authority.

Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20:9.

This remarkable passage not only mentions Jesus and His brother James as historical figures, it also underscores that the authority of the Sanhedrin had already been passed to the Romans.

## Panic Reaction

When the members of the Sanhedrin found themselves deprived of their right over life and death, they covered their heads with ashes and their bodies with sackcloth, and bemoaned, “Woe unto us for the scepter has departed from Judah and the Messiah has not come!”<sup>7</sup> *They actually thought that the Torah, the Word of God, had failed!* They should have known better.

The scepter had, indeed, been removed from Judah, but Shiloh *had* come. While the Jews wept in the streets of Jerusalem, a young son of a carpenter was growing up in Nazareth. He would present Himself as the *Meshiach Nagid*, Messiah the King, on the very day which had been predicted by the Angel Gabriel to Daniel five centuries earlier.<sup>8</sup>

\* \* \*

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) Enumerate the prophecies that allude to Judah as the royal tribe.
- 2) Contrast the role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and that in the New (Cf. Rom 11:20).
- 3) List the achievements of Samuel that he enumerates in his auditing of his career in 1 Samuel 12.
- 4) List the advantages Saul had, and list the ways he failed.

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) Was Saul saved? Cf. 1 Samuel 10:6.
- 2) Why is it necessary to pray for our nation?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Trace the concept of a “school of prophets” in the Old Testament.
- 2) Summarize the events involving the tribe of Benjamin.
- 3) “10 Strings”: Explore the current theories in quantum physics which suggest that our basic reality is composed of superstrings vibrating in 10 dimensions. Cf. Psalm 33:2; 92:3; 144:9.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 13-15. These three chapters record three sins of King Saul, sins that ultimately cost him the kingdom.

## Notes:

1. Josh MacDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, pp. 108-168.
2. Ezekiel 1:5,8.
3. *Targum Onkelos, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, and Targum Yerushalmi, The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation; The Messianic Exegesis of the Targum*, Samson H. Levy, Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, 1974.
4. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17:13.
5. This transfer of power was recorded by Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Bk 2, Ch. 8. Also, *The Jerusalem Talmud*, Sanhedrin, folio 24.
6. *The Jerusalem Talmud*, Sanhedrin, folio 24.
7. *Babylonian Talmud*, Chapter 4, folio 37; also, Augustin Lemann, *Jesus before the Sanhedrin*, 1886, translated by Julius Magath, NL#0239683, Library of Congress #15-24973.
8. Daniel 9:24-27. See also *Daniel's Seventy Weeks*, Koinonia House, 1993.

## Session 5

### 1 Samuel 13-16

#### The Rejection of the King

The next three chapters record three sins of King Saul—sins that ultimately cost him the kingdom. The fourth deals with the anointing of David.

### 1 Samuel 13

#### Saul's Impatience

The time had now come for Israel to gather at Gilgal as Samuel and Saul had agreed months before (10:8).

- 1] Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,

The Hebrew is literally, "Saul was (?) years old when he began to reign and he reigned two years over Israel." Obviously a figure has dropped out of the first part of the statement, and the second part cannot mean that he reigned for a total of only two years.

Old Testament chronology implies—and Paul in his address at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:21) distinctly teaches—that Saul reigned for 40 years, no doubt a round number but probably close to the actual figure. This textually difficult passage translated by the NIV as "Saul was 30 years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel 42 years." Many scholars, following Origen (ca. A.D. 185-254), postulate "30" (thus, the NIV).

- 2] Saul chose him three thousand *men* of Israel; *whereof* two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

After he had reigned for two years Saul began to select and train a regular army, not the larger militia he had used previously.

Having learned from his recent experience with the Ammonites, Saul set about to create a standing army of 3,000 trained troops—2,000 under his direct control and 1,000 under his son Jonathan. These he stationed at Michmash and Gibeah respectively, in order to avert Philistine attacks.

- 3] And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in Geba, and the Philistines heard *of it*. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

"Geba": or, "the hill

- 4] And all Israel heard say *that* Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and *that* Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

"was...": Heb. "did stink." Note how Saul took the credit for his son's victory at Gibeah in order to impress the people and get them to follow him.

- 5] And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven.

(Though the Hebrew reads "30,000 chariots," this would appear to be problematic because this would mean five chariots for every charioteer. The Hebrew words for "30,000" and for "3,000" look almost alike. The one could easily be mistaken for the other when the text was being copied. Perhaps this suggests that the text of 1 Samuel may have suffered a bit in transmission.)

After a preliminary encounter at Geba, halfway between Michmash and Gibeah, the Philistines (with 3,000 chariots, 6,000 charioteers and innumerable foot soldiers) pushed the Israelite troops eastward all the way to Gilgal. This is the first of Israel's three major battles with the Philistines in Saul's reign (cf. 17:1-54; 31:1-6).

- 6] When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.
- 7] And *some of* the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

The vast host of the Philistines began to assemble, and the longer Saul waited, the more dangerous his position became. If he were to strike immediately, he could defeat the enemy, but his delay only gave them opportunity to become stronger.

- 8] And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel *had appointed*: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

There Saul waited for Samuel to come and offer sacrifice as he had been told to do two years earlier (10:8). But on the seventh day, the day Samuel was to arrive, Saul could wait no longer and unlawfully took on himself the priestly task of offering community sacrifice.

- 9] And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

Saul's impatience (and unbelief) led him to go ahead without Samuel, and while Saul was completing the offering, the prophet appeared.

- 10] And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

“salute”: Heb. “bless.”

Verses 11–12 record Saul's excuses as he tried to put the blame on Samuel and the people. “I forced myself!” he told Samuel, but the prophet knew the truth. This was the beginning of the end: if God could not trust him in this little matter, how could He trust him with the kingdom?

- 11] And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;  
12] Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.  
13] And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.  
14] But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

Because of this deed, Samuel said, Saul's dynasty would come to an end (“Your kingdom will not endure” NIV), and that of another man would take its place, a man after God's own heart, the one destined to be the most famous king in all of human history!

The severity of God's judgment on Saul must be seen in the light of God's holiness. As in the instance of the people's careless handling of the ark at Beth Shemesh, so Saul had now violated the holy standards of the Lord by disobeying the Law of Moses (Lev 6:8-13) and the word of His Prophet Samuel (1 Sam 10:8).

- 15] And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people *that were* present with him, about six hundred men.  
16] And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people *that were* present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

“Gibeah”: Heb. “Geba.”

- 17] And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way *that leadeth to* Ophrah, unto the land of Shual:  
18] And another company turned the way *to* Beth-Horon: and another company turned *to* the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

Having taken Geba from the Philistines (v. 3), Saul and Jonathan, after the incident with Samuel at Gilgal, were once again attacked by the Philistines from Micmash. The Philistines divided themselves into three companies of raiding parties:

- one turned north of Micmash toward Ophrah,
- the second southwest toward Beth Horon, and
- the third east toward Zeboim (the Jordan Valley).

The rest of the overconfident Philistine army remained at Micmash.

- 19] Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make *them* swords or spears:

The Philistines had apparently learned sophisticated metallurgy from the Hittites or other Anatolian peoples with whom they had come in contact as part of the Sea People's migration from the Aegean Sea area to Canaan around 1200 B.C.

- 20] But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock.  
21] Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.  
22] So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that *were* with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

Israel had to depend on the Philistines for iron weapons and tools (v. 20). In wartime such services were not available, so only Saul and Jonathan had iron weapons.

- 23] And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.



# 1 Samuel 14

## Saul's Pride

### Jonathan's Venture

- 1] Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that *is* on the other side. But he told not his father.
- 2] And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which *is* in Migron: and the people that *were* with him *were* about six hundred men;
- 3] And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD'S priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.  
  
"Ahiah": called "Ahimelech."
- 4] And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one *was* Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh.
- 5] The forefront of the one *was* situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.
- 6] And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.
- 7] And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that *is* in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I *am* with thee according to thy heart.
- 8] Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto *these* men, and we will discover ourselves unto them.
- 9] If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them.
- 10] But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this *shall be* a sign unto us.
- 11] And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.
- 12] And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.
- 13] And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.
- 14] And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, *which* a yoke of oxen might plow.

- 15] And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.
- 16] And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down *one another*.

Jonathan's heroic encounter shocked and frightened the Philistines. Saul's lookout could see the enemy in flight. Knowing that this must have come about because of some Israelite involvement, the king checked to determine who among his troops had undertaken this independent action. Jonathan and his armor-bearer were missing.

Jonathan, Saul's son, was evidently a godly man; for the Lord gave him and his armorbearer a victory over the Philistines. Saul was only a spectator, but he then mustered his troops and shared in the victory.

- 17] Then said Saul unto the people that *were* with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armourbearer *were not there*.
- 18] And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.

Meanwhile Ahijah the priest (cf. v. 3) came bearing the ark of the Lord. It was still housed at Kiriath Jearim (7:1) but as a symbol of the presence of the Lord, it was summoned by Saul to the battle.

- 19] And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that *was* in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand.  
  
When Saul saw that the Philistines were in total disarray, he ordered Ahijah to withdraw his hand (i.e., from the sacred lots, the Urim and Thummim, 14:19; cf. Ex 28:29-30; 1 Sam 14:40-42). The will of God was now clear so Saul, with Israelite defectors and refugees, achieved a great triumph:
- 20] And Saul and all the people that *were* with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, *and there was* a very great discomfiture.
- 21] Moreover the Hebrews *that were* with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp *from the country* round about, even they also *turned* to be with the Israelites that *were* with Saul and Jonathan.
- 22] Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, *when* they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle.



- 23] So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Bethaven.  
 24] And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted *any* food.

Unfortunately, however, Saul uttered a foolish vow that day forbidding his soldiers to eat any food. How foolish to think that a sacrificial vow would give him victory when his heart was not right with God! He was later to learn, “To obey is better than to sacrifice.”

- 25] And all *they* of the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground.  
 26] And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.  
 27] But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that *was* in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.

Jonathan knew nothing about this curse, so he went ahead and ate some honey and was strengthened, and his example of practical wisdom encouraged the army to go ahead and eat after their victory (vv. 31–32).

- 28] Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food this day. And the people were faint.  
 29] Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.  
 30] How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?  
 31] And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint.  
 32] And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew *them* on the ground: and the people did eat *them* with the blood.

Saul’s army was so hungry they ate the meat without draining the blood (Lev 17:10–14), which was even worse than breaking the vow.

- 33] Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.

“transgressed”: or, “dealt treacherously.”

- 34] And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay *them* here, and

eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew *them* there.

This so alarmed Saul that he hastily built an altar on which to offer a propitiatory sacrifice to the Lord.

- 35] And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.  
 36] And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God.  
 37] And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day.

Saul then determined to pursue and plunder the Philistines further but could not get an answer from the Lord. This meant to Saul that someone had violated the fast, and by means of the lot (i.e., the Urim and Thummin, vv. 41–42; cf. v. 19) he discovered it was his own son Jonathan.

Only the interposition of Saul’s men prevented Jonathan’s execution (v. 45).

- 38] And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day.  
 39] For, *as* the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But *there was* not a man among all the people *that* answered him.  
 40] Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee.  
 41] Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect *lot*. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped.

“Give...”: or, “Shew the innocent...” “...escaped”: Heb. “went forth.”

- 42] And Saul said, Cast *lots* between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken.  
 43] Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in mine hand, *and*, lo, I must die.  
 44] And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.

Saul tried to amend this by offering the spoils as a sacrifice to God. When the army went to their next engagement, they sought the guidance of God but failed to get an answer. This led to Saul’s discovery of Jonathan’s

disobedience, and the foolish king was going to kill his own son!  
How easy it is to be convicted about somebody else's sins!

- 45] And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: *as* the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.

The people rescued Jonathan, but Saul's actions revealed the darkness of his heart. Trouble was soon to come. His pride would bring him low.

- 46] Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place.  
47] So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed *them*.  
48] And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.

The major campaigns of Saul are listed in verses 47-48 and include victories over Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zobah (the Arameans), the Philistines, and even the Amalekites, though his success over the latter was tempered by his lack of complete obedience to God (cf. 15:20-23).

- 49] Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchishua: and the names of his two daughters *were these*; the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal:  
50] And the name of Saul's wife *was* Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host *was* Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle.

(According to 1 Chronicles 8:33 and 9:39, Ner was Saul's grandfather—Ner's son was Kish and Kish's son was Saul—but in 1 Samuel 14:50 Ner appears to be Saul's uncle and Abner his cousin. In 1 Chronicles Abner, though not mentioned, would be Saul's *uncle*, for Abner was Ner's son (1 Sam 14:50). This seeming contradiction is eliminated by the Hebrew of 1 Samuel 14:50b, which says literally, "Abner son of Ner, uncle of Saul," with the understanding that the ambiguous "uncle of Saul" refers not to Ner but to Abner.)

- 51] And Kish *was* the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner *was* the son of Abiel.

The royal family consisted of Saul; his wife Ahinoam; his three sons, Jonathan, Ishvi (not the same as Ish-Bosheth or Esh-Baal; cf. 1 Chr 10:2

where Ishvi is the same person as Abinadab), and Malki-Shua; his daughters Merab and Michal (David's first wife; cf. 1 Sam 18:27); and Abner, who served as Saul's commander of the army.

Ishvi is probably not the same as Ish-bosheth because Ish-bosheth was apparently Saul's youngest son born after Saul began to reign. For that reason he is not listed in 1 Samuel 14:49 but is listed in the total list of Saul's sons in 1 Chronicles 8:33 (cf. comments on 2 Sam 2:8).

- 52] And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

## 1 Samuel 15 Saul's Disobedience

Long before the time of Saul, in the days of the wilderness wandering, Israel had been savagely attacked from the rear by the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16):

- 8] Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.  
9] And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. {Joshua: called Jesus}  
10] So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.  
11] And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.  
12] But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.  
13] And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.  
14] And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.  
15] And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-Nissi:

*Jehovah-Nissi*: that is, "The LORD my banner."

- 16] For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

It was a deed the Lord had promised to avenge someday:

*Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.*

Deut 25:17-19

God would give Saul one more chance to prove himself, this time by utterly destroying Israel's old enemies, the Amalekites.

- 1] Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee *to be* king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.
- 2] Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember *that* which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid *wait* for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.
- 3] Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

The time had now come, so Samuel commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites totally, that is, to "place them under the ban (*cherem*) of holy war" (1 Sam 15:3; cf. vv. 8-9, 15, 18, 20-21; Deut 20:16-18).

- 4] And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.
- 5] And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.
- 6] And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

However, Saul was to spare the Kenites since they had shown kindness to Israel in the wilderness wandering (1 Sam 15:6; cf. Ex 18:9-10). [Jethro was a Kenite, Judg 1:16.]

Saul proceeded to do the bidding of Samuel *but not entirely*:

- 7] And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah *until* thou comest to Shur, that *is* over against Egypt.
- 8] And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.
- 9] But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all *that was* good, and would not utterly

destroy them: but every thing *that was* vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

When Saul saw the fatness of the Amalekite sheep and cattle and when he considered the enhancement of his own glory and prestige in bringing back Agag, king of Amalek, as prisoner, he could not resist returning them as public exhibits of his leadership. That this was Saul's intent is clear from verse 12, which speaks of Saul's erecting a monument to his own honor.

- 10] Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying,
- 11] It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.
- 12] And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

(Carmel in Judah, not the Carmel on the upper Mediterranean coast).

- 13] And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed *be* thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.
- 14] And Samuel said, What *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

When Samuel approached Saul, the king lied to him and told him he had obeyed God's Word. Just about that time Saul's sins found him out, for the noise of the animals gave him away.

- 15] And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

Saul tried to justify his disobedience by claiming that the animals were brought as sacrifice to the LORD (vv. 13, 15); he will also argue that they were brought because of the insistence of the soldiers (vv. 20-21).

- 16] Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.
- 17] And Samuel said, When thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou not *made* the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?
- 18] And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.
- 19] Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?

- 20] And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.
- 21] But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

Once more, Saul resorted to excuses: “They” (the people) saved the animals, but “we” (himself and the leaders) have utterly destroyed the rest.

- 22] And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.

But Samuel responded with a statement of principle that is timeless in its application: *To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*

- 23] For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

“witchcraft”: Heb. “divination.”

Then Samuel delivered God’s message to the rejected king:

- Saul had lost his early humility (9:21) and became proud and disobedient;
- He had rebelled against the Word of the Lord and had tried to make up for his disobedience by sacrifices (vv. 21–23).
- Saul had substituted saying for doing (15:13);  
excuses for confessions (15:15 and 21); and  
sacrifice for obedience (v. 22).
- He was too quick to criticize and blame others; he was unwilling to face and judge his own sins.

- 24] And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.
- 25] Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.
- 26] And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.
- 27] And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

When Samuel was about to leave Saul, the king confessed his sins, but his confession did not impress the prophet. True confession involves more than saying “I have sinned”; it means repentance and true sorrow for sin.

As Samuel turned away, Saul held to his robe and ripped it, and Samuel took this as a prophecy that the kingdom would be torn from Saul and given to another (David), who would become the most famous king in human history.

- 28] And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is* better than thou.
- 29] And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he *is* not a man, that he should repent.
- 30] Then he said, I have sinned: *yet* honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.

Saul was more concerned about what the people thought than what God thought; he wanted a good reputation, but he did not want true character.

- 31] So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.
- 32] Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.
- 33] And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

Samuel worshiped with Saul, and then killed Agag as the Lord had commanded, but this was the last time Samuel walked with Saul.

- 34] Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul.
- 35] And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

Though still recognized by the people as their king for about 15 more years, Saul was deposed by the LORD right then (cf. 16:14). The finality of it all was not missed by Samuel, for from that day Samuel never visited the king again. The estrangement between Samuel and Saul represents that which now existed in permanent form between the Lord Himself and the disobedient king. Though God had permitted Saul to reign in

response to the demand of the people, that very concession now grieved the heart of the LORD.

Saul had lost his best friend; he had lost the Lord's blessing; he had lost the kingdom. From now on, he would be on a dark, winding road that would end with him becoming a castaway and being slain by one of the very Amalekites he had refused to destroy (2 Sam 1:13). [But Agag also had a son that was spared: which will also lead to Haman of Esther! (Esther 3:1).]

## 1 Samuel 16

We enter now into a study of the life of David, "the man after God's own heart." As Saul is a picture of the carnal life, so David is a picture of the spiritual life of the believer who walks by faith in the Lord.

It is true that David sinned. Unlike Saul, however, David confessed his sins and sought to restore his fellowship with God.

### The Obedient Son (16:1–13)

- 1] And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

What a solemn statement: "I have rejected Saul!" This rejection was not yet known to the people, and Saul was still "putting on a front" as the king of the land.

A person may be rejected by God and still be accepted by men, but ultimately God's judgment will fall.

- 2] And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear *it*, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

So dangerous was Saul that Samuel had to devise a plan to escape his wrath when visiting Bethlehem. See 22:17–19 for a sample of Saul's jealous rage.

- 3] And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me *him* whom I name unto thee.  
4] And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the

- elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?  
5] And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.  
6] And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed *is* before him.

"Eliab": called, "Elihu."

When, at God's direction, Samuel arrived at the house of Jesse to invite them to the feast, David was not even there! He was in the fields caring for the sheep. We cannot help but be impressed with David's obedience and humility. As the "baby of the family" he had very little status, but he was faithful to his father and to the Lord.

David's life illustrates Matthew 25:21—he began as a servant and became a ruler; he was faithful with a few sheep and then inherited the whole nation; he knew how to work, so God gave him joy. Compare this to the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, who began as a leader and ended as a servant; began owning many things and ended up poor; and started with pleasure but finished in slavery. Matthew 25:21 outlines God's method of success, and we see it proved in the life of David.

- 7] But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Samuel was about to make the mistake of evaluating the men by their physical gifts (see 10:24) when God reminded him that the heart was the important thing. Read Prov. 4:23.

- 8] Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.  
9] Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

"Shammah": "Shimeah," also called, "Shimma."

- 10] Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.  
11] And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all *thy* children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.  
12] And he sent, and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy, *and* withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this *is* he.



When David appeared, summoned from the field, God told Samuel, “This is he!” David was fair of skin, and he had red hair. His handsome appearance and his surrendered heart were a wonderful combination. He was the eighth son, and eight is the number of new beginning. His anointing with oil brought him a special unction from the Spirit of God, and from that hour he was God’s man.

It is not likely that David or his family understood the significance of the anointing that day. Samuel would certainly explain it to David at an opportune time.

- 13] Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

### The Humble Servant (16:14–23)

- 14] But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

“troubled”: or, “terrified.”

What a tragic contrast: the Spirit came upon David, but departed from Saul! An evil spirit was permitted by God to afflict Saul and he became, at times, like a madman. See 18:10 and 19:9. This is evidence of the fact that the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament says nothing about salvation but only that His power worked in those whom God selected for service (cf. Judg 3:10; 6:34; 13:25; 14:6; 1 Sam 10:10; 16:13).

- 15] And Saul’s servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.  
16] Let our lord now command thy servants, *which are* before thee, to seek out a man, *who is* a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

His strange behavior prompted his servants to suggest that he call a skilled musician to soothe him. How sad that Saul’s servants dealt with the symptoms and not with the causes, for music could never change Saul’s sinful heart. True, the king might “feel better” afterward, but it would be a false peace. The servants should have prayed for Saul to get right with God!

- 17] And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring *him* to me.  
18] Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, *that is* cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD *is* with him.

David was just the man Saul needed, and one of the servants suggested him. Already we can see David’s abilities being recognized, yet David was not promoting himself: God was doing it. Read carefully Prov 22:29; also 1 Peter 5:6.

Too many young people today try to push themselves into prominent places without first proving themselves at home in the small matters.

- 19] Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which *is* with the sheep.  
20] And Jesse took an ass *laden* with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent *them* by David his son unto Saul.  
21] And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer.  
22] And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

David came to court and immediately became a favorite. Of course, had Saul known that God had chosen David to be king, he would have immediately tried to kill the lad. When he did discover this, Saul began to persecute David and hunt him in the wilds of Israel.

- 23] And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

David did not remain permanently at court; 17:15 should read, “But David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father’s sheep.”

He would visit the court when needed, but he did not neglect his responsibilities at home. What humility! Here is a gifted lad, chosen to be king, anointed of God, yet he still cares for the sheep and works as a servant! No wonder God was able to use David.

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) What three sins cost Saul his kingdom?
- 2) List several textual problems in this session. Do any of them affect doctrine?
- 3) How did Saul's failure regarding the Amalekites impact the days of Esther?
- 4) Where was the anointing of David prophesied in the days of the Judges?
- 5) Enumerate those from whom the Holy Spirit departed in the Old Testament. List those of the New Testament.

## Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) Discuss the initiative of Jonathan and his armor bearer and the implications for us today.
- 2) Discuss the dangers of foolish vows, even today.
- 3) Is fasting appropriate today? If so, under what conditions?
- 4) Contrast the evaluation of gifts with that of fruits.

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Profile the role technological advantages in the military history of the Bible.
- 2) Trace the role of Bethlehem in the Scriptures.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read 1 Samuel 17- 20. What does Genesis 6 have to do with this narrative?

## Session 6 1 Samuel 17 - 20

### 1 Samuel 17 David & Goliath

The familiar story of David and Goliath carries with it many practical lessons for the Christian life. All of us face giants of one kind or another, but we too may overcome them through the power of God.

- 1] Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which *belongeth* to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephesdammim.

"Ephesdammim": or, the coast of Dammim, called Pasdammim. Shochoh is the modern Shuweikeh, some fourteen miles west of Bethlehem. The name *Shochoh* has been found on jar handles in the neighborhood.

- 2] And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines.

The armies were drawn up on opposite sides of the Valley of Elah, a few miles southwest of Jerusalem.

"Valley of Elah." Elah means "oak" or "terebinth." The area probably received its name from a distinctive tree that flourished in the region.

- 3] And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and *there was* a valley between them.

Apparently intimidated by each other, they decided that the outcome should be determined by a contest of champions who would engage each other in combat.

- 4] And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height *was* six cubits and a span.

A cubit is approximately eighteen inches, a span about nine inches. Goliath stood nine feet and nine inches tall. He was a survivor of the ancient race of *Anakim*, a remnant of which found refuge in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod, when Joshua "cut them off" (Josh 11:21, 22) from the mountains of Judah.

He was “the Philistine” (17:8), their great champion, and so terrifying was he that he threw the Jewish army into panic (v. 11). Had Saul been a godly leader, he would have claimed Deut 20 and led his army to victory; but when people are out of fellowship with God, they can only lead others into defeat.

- 5] And *he had* an helmet of brass upon his head, and he *was* armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat *was* five thousand shekels of brass.

His armor alone weighed over 125 pounds. (40 shekels/lb.) Armor of this kind is represented on the Assyrian sculptures.

“Brass”:. Apart from the javelin, all of Goliath’s defensive weapons were of bronze, while those used for attack were iron.

- 6] And *he had* greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders.

“target”: or, “gorget”: a piece of armor protecting the throat; an ornamental collar covering the throat and shoulders. Apart from the javelin, all of Goliath’s defensive weapons were of bronze, while those used for attack were iron.

- 7] And the staff of his spear *was* like a weaver’s beam; and his spear’s head *weighed* six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him.

The tip: 15 pounds!

- 8] And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set *your* battle in array? *am* not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me.

The Targum of Jonathan states that Goliath went on the boast that it was he who had killed Hophni and Phinehas and carried the ark to the house of Dagon, and on many occasions had slaughtered Israelites.

- 9] If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.  
10] And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.

Many battles in ancient times were decided by a contest between two warriors. Achilles and Hector agreed to a duel to settle the Trojan War.

- 11] When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.  
12] Now David *was* the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehemjudah, whose name *was* Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went among men *for* an old man in the days of Saul.  
13] And the three eldest sons of Jesse went *and* followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle *were* Eliab the firstborn, and next unto him Abinadab, and the third Shammah.  
14] And David *was* the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul.  
15] But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem.  
16] And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days.  
17] And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched *corn*, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren;

“Parched corn” describe grain plucked just as it was ripening, and roasted in a pan or on an iron plate. Arabs still eat “parched corn” as an important element in their diet.

- 18] And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of *their* thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge.

Take their pledge: Bring back from them some proof that he had fulfilled his mission.

- 19] Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, *were* in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.  
20] And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle.

“trench”: or, “place of the carriage.”

“fight”: or, “battle array,” or, “place of fight.”

- 21] For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army.  
22] And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren.

“his carriage”: Heb. “the vessels from upon him.”

- 23] And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard *them*.  
24] And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid.

25] And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, *that* the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

“Free” = “from forced labor and contributions (cf. 8:11).”

26] And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who *is* this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

27] And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him.

28] And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

Note that his own brethren accused him and tried to discourage him; Satan always has somebody to tell us “it can't be done.” Cf. Eliab's anger with the hatred of Joseph's brethren for him (Gen 37). Apparently Eliab was unaware of Samuel's having anointed David to succeed Saul; he may have interpreted the anointing to mean that David was to become a servant of Samuel.

29] And David said, What have I now done? *Is there* not a cause?

30] And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner.

31] And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed *them* before Saul: and he sent for him.

32] And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

33] And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou *art but* a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

Even Saul tried to dissuade him: “You are not able” (v. 33, NKJV). Well, in himself, David was not able, but in the power of the Lord he could overcome any enemy. (See Phil 4:13; Eph 3:20–21.)

34] And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

The Syrian bear is said to be especially ferocious, and appears to have been more dreaded than the lion.

35] And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered *it* out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught *him* by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

36] Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

God had tested David privately with a lion and a bear; now he was to test him openly with a giant. If we are faithful in the private battles, God will see us through the public testings. Too often God's people faint at the smallest test that comes their way, little realizing that the “little tests” are but preparation for the bigger battles that are sure to come (Jer 12:5).

37] David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

38] And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

The fact that David tried on the armor of Saul indicates that he approximated the height of Saul. If this is the case, the taunts of Goliath concerning the abilities of the “youth” are more sharply barbed than is commonly supposed.

39] And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved *it*. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved *them*. And David put them off him.

40] And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling *was* in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

In all ages the sling has been the favorite weapon of the shepherds of Syria. The Benjamites were especially expert in its use; even the left-handed could sling stones “at an hair (breadth) and not miss” (Judges 20:16). Some suspect that David learned from the nearby Benjamites.

**Why five stones?** Goliath had four brothers! David was ready take them all on! Cf. 2 Sam 21:16-22. Ishbibenob, Saph, Lami (Cf. 1 Chr 20:5) and another unnamed, all brothers of Goliath. All were sons of “the giant,” were called *Anakim*, also *Rephaim* (often translated “giant,” and also, “dead.” Cf. Isaiah 26:14; in the Hebrew). See our briefing package, *The Return of the Nephilim* for a more complete discussion.

41] And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield *went* before him.

- 42] And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was *but* a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.
- 43] And the Philistine said unto David, *Am* I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.
- 44] And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.
- 45] Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.
- 46] This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

“deliver...”: Heb. “shut thee up.”

- 47] And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle *is* the LORD’S, and he will give you into our hands.
- 48] And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

[Some conjecture that there may have been sight problems among descendants of Nephilim. Running directly may have been an informed strategy.]

- 49] And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang *it*, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

[Sling skill learned from the Benjamites? Judges 20:16.]

- 50] So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but *there was* no sword in the hand of David.
- 51] Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

David used simple, humble weapons: a sling and five stones (see 1 Cor 1:27–28 and 2 Cor 10:3–5). David knew how Gideon was given victory with weak weapons, and he knew that Gideon’s God was not dead. Neither his brothers’ criticism nor Saul’s unbelief kept David from trusting God for victory. The stone hit its mark; the giant fell down, and David used the giant’s own sword to cut off his head! This one victory opened the way for Israel to attack the Philistines and spoil their camp.

“And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4, NKJV). We also are “more than conquerors”!

## Some Types Here

David is a picture of Jesus Christ. David’s name means “beloved,” and Christ is God’s beloved Son.

- Both were born in Bethlehem.
- Both were rejected by their brethren. (Of course, when David became king, his brethren received him, just as Joseph’s brothers ultimately discovered him—after an initial rejection; the Jews will receive Christ when He returns to reign.)
- David was anointed king years before he was permitted to reign, just as Christ is King now but will not reign on earth until Satan is banished.
- Just as David was sent by his father to the battlefield, so Christ was sent by the Father to this world.
- King Saul can be considered a type of Satan in this present age; for Saul was rejected and defeated, yet permitted to reign until David came to the throne. Satan is permitted to persecute God’s people, yet one day he too will be defeated.
- Goliath illustrates Satan in his pride and power. Read carefully Luke 11:14–23: Satan is the strong man guarding his goods (people under his control), and Christ is the Stronger Man who overcomes him. Christ invaded Satan’s kingdom, overcame his power, took his armor, and now is dividing his spoils by saving lost souls and making them children of God.

This is what David did that day: he overcame the strong man and allowed Israel to divide the spoils (vv. 52–54).

We Christians do not simply fight *for* victory, we fight *from* victory, the victory won at the cross (Col. 2:15). “Be of good cheer,” said Jesus, “I have overcome (John 16:33).”

- 52] And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.



- 53] And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents.
- 54] And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent.

Jerusalem was still a non-Hebrew city (2 Sam 5:4ff.). A little later we find the sword of Goliath at Nob (21:9), and hence some think Nob is intended here. Others think David brought the head of Goliath to Jerusalem at a later period. However, Josh 15:63 and Judg 1:8 show that Hebrews did live at Jerusalem. It was the citadel on Mount Zion that was in the control of the Jebusites.

- 55] And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son *is* this youth? And Abner said, *As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.*

When the conflict was over, Saul inquired as to the identity of the young warrior and learned that he was David, son of Jesse (vv. 55, 58). Why could not Saul recognize David, who had already served him for some time as musician and armor-bearer?

One answer is that Saul was not asking who David was but for the first time was curious about David's family connections: Whose son is that young man? (v. 55; cf. v. 25) When David himself was interrogated he did not say, "I am David," but only, I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem (v. 58). Since Saul had promised his daughter to the victor, he would certainly ask about the boy's family.

Another solution is that David's previous service had been brief and intermittent and now several years had passed since Saul had last seen him. If, for example, David had been only 12 years old when he came as Saul's musician and had stayed off and on for only a year or so, he might have been 17 or 18 by the time of the Philistine episode and no longer recognizable to Saul. This view is strengthened by the fact that after David joined himself to Saul this time, the king "did not let him return to his father's house" (v. 15; 18:2). This implies that David's previous tenure had been intermittent, not permanent.

- 56] And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling *is*.
- 57] And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.
- 58] And Saul said to him, Whose son *art* thou, *thou* young man? And David answered, I *am* the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

David's grandfather was Obed, the son of Boaz and Ruth; it was Ruth that connects David to Bethlehem. (Obed's grandmother was Rahab of Jericho fame).

## 1 Samuel 18 David in Saul's Court

David's greatest test of faith was not when he faced Goliath; it was when he had to serve daily in Saul's court.

- 1] And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

"Knit" is the same Hebrew word used in Gen 44:30 to express Jacob's love for Benjamin. David would be the next king, but, by rights, Jonathan should inherit the crown. The friendship between these two men of God is a great example for us.

- 2] And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.
- 3] Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.
- 4] And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

So close did this friendship become that Jonathan, though heir apparent to the throne of Israel (cf. 20:31), stripped himself of his own royal regalia and placed it on David in recognition of David's divine election to be king (18:4; cf. 23:17).

[Cf. the exchange of armor between Glaucus and Diomedes when they met before Troy and thus confirmed the pledge of old family friendship (Homer *The Iliad* VI. 230).]

- 5] And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, *and* behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.
- 6] And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.

"Philistine": or, "Philistines."

“...instruments...”: Heb. “three stringed instruments.”

- 7] And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

“Played” is used of festive sports, and especially of festal dancing (1 Chr 15:29). Some women performed mimic dances while others sang in alternate choruses.

- 8] And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom?

“displeased him”: Heb. “was evil in his eyes.”

Saul’s heart filled with envy when he heard that David had more praise than he did. Praise is like a hot furnace: it reveals what a person is really made of.

*As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.*  
Prov 27:21

The praise that made David humble only brought the dross to the top in Saul’s heart and revealed his pride and desire for glory.

- 9] And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.  
10] And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a javelin in Saul’s hand.

Saul, it seems, held the javelin in his hand as a scepter, according to an ancient custom.

- 11] And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice.  
12] And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.  
13] Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

V.5 suggests that David was the head of Saul’s personal bodyguard, but now he is demoted to being merely the captain over one thousand men.

- 14] And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD *was* with him.

- 15] Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.  
16] But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.  
17] And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD’S battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

Saul had promised one of his daughters to the man who defeated Goliath (17:25), and now he was going to fulfill his promise.

- 18] And David said unto Saul, Who *am* I? and what *is* my life, *or* my father’s family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?

Notice David’s humility before the king.

- 19] But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul’s daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife.

Saul did not keep his word: the woman was given to another man.

- 20] And Michal Saul’s daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.  
21] And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in *the one of* the twain.

Then Saul tried to use his daughter Michal as a tool to slay David; for the king demanded an impossible dowry, hoping that David would be killed in trying to obtain it. But the Lord was with David, and he completed the mission successfully.

It is unfortunate that he did marry Michal, for the union was never a happy one. While in exile, David lost Michal to another man (25:44), but he gained her back when he started to reign at Hebron (2 Sam 3:13–16). Her attitude toward David led to a complete separation later (2 Sam 6:20–23).

- 22] And Saul commanded his servants, *saying*, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king’s son in law.  
23] And Saul’s servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you *a light thing* to be a king’s son in law, seeing that I *am* a poor man, and lightly esteemed?  
24] And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David.  
25] And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry,

but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

Some payment was made to the father by the prospective bridegroom. Service might be rendered instead of payment in money (Gen 29:20). [The same custom prevailed among the ancient Greeks (Homer *The Iliad* XVI. 178; *The Odyssey* VIII. 318), Babylonians, and Assyrians, and it still survives in the East.]

- 26] And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days were not expired.

“expired”: Heb. “fulfilled.”

- 27] Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.
- 28] And Saul saw and knew that the LORD *was* with David, and *that* Michal Saul's daughter loved him.
- 29] And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.
- 30] Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, *that* David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

“set by”: Heb. “precious.”

## 1 Samuel 19

- 1] And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

Saul's plan to murder David was no longer a secret, for now the king's servants were commanded to slay him. But Saul had been unable to kill David in previous attempts (18:11, 25), and now it appeared that his anger was spent and David could return to the court.

- 2] But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret *place*, and hide thyself:
- 3] And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou *art*, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

Certainly the king's son could intercede for David. Saul even swore that he would protect David, but these promises were never fulfilled. No sooner did David win a great victory on the battlefield than Saul's old envy returned, and he threw the spear again.

- 4] And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works *have been* to thee-ward very good:
- 5] For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest *it*, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?
- 6] And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, *As* the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.
- 7] And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

“in times...”: Heb. “yesterday, third day.”

- 8] And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him.
- 9] And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with *his* hand.

After an initial and successful attempt by Jonathan to soothe his father's feelings toward David, Saul set in motion further steps to destroy David. First he tried to slay him once more with his own hand (vv. 9-10); then he hired conspirators to murder him in his bed, a plot foiled by Michal (vv. 11-17). Next Saul sent men to Naioth at Ramah where David had taken refuge with Samuel (vv. 18-24).

- 10] And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.
- 11] Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain.
- 12] So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped.

The house of Michal was apparently situated on a wall. Cf. the escape of the spies from Jericho (Josh 2:15) and of Saul from Damascus (Acts 9:25).

- 13] And Michal took an image, and laid *it* in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' *hair* for his bolster, and covered *it* with a cloth.

“image”: Heb. *Teraphim*. Michal, like Rachel, probably kept *teraphim* in secret because of barrenness (Gen 31:19). [Josephus relates that Michal placed a still-moving goat’s liver in the bed to make the messengers believe that there was a breathing invalid beneath.]

This was the beginning of serious trouble for David, for it is never right to do evil that good may come of it (Rom 3:8). Note that Michal used an idol to give the impression that David was sick in bed! She was now deceiving her own father and only making matters worse (Cf. Ps 59).

- 14] And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He *is* sick.
- 15] And Saul sent the messengers *again* to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.
- 16] And when the messengers were come in, behold, *there was* an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats’ *hair* for his bolster.
- 17] And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?
- 18] So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth.

Somewhere in Ramah, whether a building or a district is uncertain. Ramah was Samuel’s hometown. Naioth means *dwelling*s, and may be the college or common residence of the society of prophets Samuel gathered round him at Ramah.

From this passage we learn that there was a company of prophets at Ramah, under the superintendence of Samuel, whose members lived in a common building, and that Samuel had his own house at Ramah (7:17ff), although he sometimes lived in Naioth.

- 19] And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David *is* at Naioth in Ramah.
- 20] And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing *as* appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.
- 21] And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also.

This means that they fell into a trance or an ecstatic state, a condition which immobilized them and made them incapable of accomplishing their evil intentions.

- 22] Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that *is* in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where *are* Samuel and David? And *one* said, Behold, *they be* at Naioth in Ramah.

- 23] And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.
- 24] And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, *Is* Saul also among the prophets?

“lay”: Heb. “fell.” Note that Samuel defeated Saul, not with lies or weapons, but with the Spirit of God. By using spiritual weapons, Samuel delayed Saul and gave David opportunity to get away.

## 1 Samuel 20 David a Fugitive in Exile

- 1] And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what *is* mine iniquity? and what *is* my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?
- 2] And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it *is* not *so*.

“shew...”: Heb. “uncover mine ear.”

- 3] And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly *as* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, *there is* but a step between me and death.

(Jewish commentaries here refer to the “step” David took in avoiding Saul’s spear.)

- 4] Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do *it* for thee.

“Whatsoever...”: or, “Say what is thy mind and I will do, etc.”

“...desireth”: Heb. “speaketh, or, thinketh.”

- 5] And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow *is* the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third *day* at even.

Having become persuaded of the irreconcilable nature of Saul’s hostility toward him, David sought to learn its source and to determine if there might be a means of reconciliation. The test would be Saul’s response

to David's absence from the New Moon feast, held on the first day of every month.

For the observance of new moon festivals in Israel, see 2 Kings 4:23; Isaiah 1:13; Amos 8:5. It was not merely a religious festival (Num 10:10; 28:11-15), but also a civil festival. David, as a member of the royal household, was expected to be present at the new moon sacrificial meal.

- 6] If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked *leave* of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for *there is* a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

“...sacrifice”: or, “feast.”

Jonathan lied to his father about David's whereabouts (vv. 6, 28), but he had to wait a few days to see how the matter would end. Meanwhile, he and David made a covenant together that David would protect Jonathan's family when he became king, a promise that David fulfilled (2 Sam 9).

- 7] If he say thus, *It is well*; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, *then* be sure that evil is determined by him.
- 8] Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldst thou bring me to thy father?
- 9] And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?
- 10] Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what *if* thy father answer thee roughly?
- 11] And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.
- 12] And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, *or* the third *day*, and, behold, *if there be* good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee;

“...sounded”: Heb. “searched.”

“...shew...”: Heb. “uncover thine ear.”

- 13] The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father *to do* thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father.
- 14] And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not:
- 15] But *also* thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.

Jonathan, who was David's brother-in-law, surmised that his friend would succeed Saul upon the throne. Therefore he requested that when David's enemies were destroyed his own relationship with David's house might not be forgotten or disowned.

- 16] So Jonathan made *a covenant* with the house of David, *saying*, Let the LORD even require *it* at the hand of David's enemies.

“...made”: Heb. “cut.”

- 17] And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

“...because...”: or, “by his love toward him.”

- 18] Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow *is* the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.

“...empty”: Heb. “missed.”

- 19] And *when* thou hast stayed three days, *then* thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was *in hand*, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel.

“...quickly”: or, diligently: Heb. “greatly.”

“Ezel”: or, “that sheweth the way.”

“...when the...”: Heb. “in the day of the business.”

- 20] And I will shoot three arrows on the side *thereof*, as though I shot at a mark.
- 21] And, behold, I will send a lad, *saying*, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows *are* on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for *there is* peace to thee, and no hurt; *as* the LORD liveth.

“no hurt”: Heb. “not any thing.”

- 22] But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows *are* beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away.
- 23] And *as touching* the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD *be* between thee and me for ever.
- 24] So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat.
- 25] And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, *even* upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty.

Saul occupied the place of honor, with his back to the wall opposite the entrance; Jonathan was opposite him, Abner and David to his right and



left. Apparently these four sat alone at a round table; so David's absence was conspicuous.

- 26] Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he *is* not clean; surely he *is* not clean.

At first Saul thought David was absent because he was ceremonially unclean.

- 27] And it came to pass on the morrow, *which was* the second *day* of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?

The king knew that uncleanness could not be the reason for his second absence, since the impurity Saul had in mind lasted only until sunset (Lev 15:16).

- 28] And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked *leave* of me *to go* to Bethlehem:  
29] And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me *to be there*: and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table.

(The eldest brother, acting then as the head of the family, arranged the sacrificial meal. This implies that Jesse was well advanced in years.)

- 30] Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious *woman*, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?

"Thou...": or, "Thou perverse rebel": Heb. "Son of perverse rebellion." Saul was disclaiming Jonathan and suggesting that people would think he was the fruit of an adulterous union. Saul did not believe Jonathan's story (vv. 24–33), and his reaction almost cost Jonathan his life! When God abandons a person and the devil takes over, there is no end to the wickedness that results. Jonathan left the table and met David the next morning; they wept together and said farewell.

- 31] For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

"...shall...": Heb. "is the son of death."

Saul evidently suspected David as his rival who would either wrest the government from him, or, at any rate, after his death, from his son.

- 32] And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?  
33] And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.  
34] So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.  
35] And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.  
36] And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. *And* as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.

"...beyond...": Heb. "to pass over him."

- 37] And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, *Is* not the arrow beyond thee?  
38] And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.  
39] But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.  
40] And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry *them* to the city.

"...artillery": Heb. "instruments."

"...his lad": Heb. "the lad that was his."

- 41] *And* as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of *a place* toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.

In token of reverence and loyalty to the king's son.

- 42] And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

"...forasmuch...": or, "the LORD be witness of that which etc."

But Jonathan said that his own bond of loyalty with David would never be broken. Jonathan was giving up a kingdom for the love of a friend.

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) What does Genesis 6 have to do with the narrative of Goliath?
- 2) Describe Goliath in contemporary terms. Profile David in contemporary terms.
- 3) Why did David pick up 5 stones (when only one was necessary)?

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) In what ways was David a “type” of Jesus Christ?
- 2) In what ways was the ancient Jewish wedding rite a “type” of Christ and the Church? What was the dowry? What are the implications eschatologically?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Summarize occurrences and references to post-flood *Nephilim* (or *Rephaim*).

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read 1 Samuel 21-26.

## Session 7 1 Samuel 21 - 26 David in Exile

As far as can be determined, David was a young man of no more than 20 when he was forced to leave Saul’s palace and his own home because of Saul’s relentless determination to destroy him. Driven to the wilderness area of Judah, the logical place because of his familiarity with it from childhood, David lived out a “Robin Hood” existence for nearly 10 years.

(This period of time is reckoned from the fact that David was 30 when he began to rule over Judah at Hebron (2 Sam 5:4), his accession occurring immediately after Saul’s death (2 Sam 2:10-11). David had spent a year and four months among the Philistines just before that (1 Sam 27:7) and, thus, was only about 20 when exiled from Saul.)

The events of Chapters 21-26 must then represent only a fraction of David’s activity during this period. But God was teaching David many things in those days, lessons David still shares with all who read his psalms which find their setting in this turbulent period of his life (e.g., Ps 18; 34; 52; 54; 56-57).

## 1 Samuel 21

### David Lied to Ahimelech (21:1–9)

David fled again, this time to Nob, where the tabernacle was established. Nob was at that time a priests’ city (22:19), where stood the Tabernacle and where the legal worship was carried on. According to Isa 10:30, 32, it was between Anathoth and Jerusalem, about one mile north of Jerusalem, on a ridge from the brow of which one can see the temple area.

- 1] Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why *art* thou alone, and no man with thee?

“Ahimelech”: also called, “Ahiah.”

- 2] And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed *my* servants to such and such a place.

But he lied to the priest by claiming to be on business for Saul.

- 3] Now therefore what is under thine hand? give *me* five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

“...present”: Heb. “found.”

- 4] And the priest answered David, and said, *There is* no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.

There was no ordinary bread, the priest replied, but only the holy showbread (Ex 25:30, *KJV*) which had been desacralized by being replaced with fresh bread (1 Sam 21:6; cf. Lev 24:5-9).

This could be eaten, as Jesus suggested later on (Mt 12:3-4), but ordinarily only by the priests and certainly only by those who were ceremonially pure (1 Sam 21:4-5; Lev 15:18). David's eating illustrated a concession that the Law permitted—life is more holy than bread (Mt 12:7-8).

- 5] And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women *have been* kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and *the bread is* in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.

“...yea...”: or, “especially when this day there is other sanctified in the vessel.”

“The vessels”: This may refer to the young men's bodies, as in 1 Thess 4:4. The men were ceremonially clean; so they were fit to partake of holy things.

Ahimelech departed from the Levitical law and observed the higher commandment of love to a neighbor (Lev 19:18). When Mk 2:26 assigns this action to the days of Abiathar, the high priest, the statement rests upon the copyist's memory, in which Ahimelech is confounded with his son Abiathar. It is also possible that the son acted as coadjutor to his father, as Eli's sons apparently did (cf. 1 Sam 4:4).

- 6] So the priest gave him hallowed *bread*: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

The priest gave David and his men the holy bread to eat and also (v.9) the sword of Goliath for David's protection.

The shewbread: So called because it was solemnly placed as an offering in the presence of Jehovah. A golden table for the shewbread in Solomon's Temple is mentioned in 1 Kgs 7:48; and the form of the table, as it existed in Herod's Temple, is preserved in the sculptures on the Arch of Titus at Rome.

The shewbread was renewed every Sabbath, and the loaves that remained were to be eaten by the priests in the Holy Place.

Jesus referred to this incident (Mt 12:3, 4; Mk 2:25, 26; Lk 6:3-5), to show that when moral and ceremonial obligations come into conflict, the ceremonial gives way to the moral.

- 7] Now a certain man of the servants of Saul *was* there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name *was* Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that *belonged* to Saul.

The whole plan seemed to be successful, except that one of Saul's spies, Doeg, was there to witness the events; and this ultimately led to treachery and bloodshed (22:9ff; see Ps. 52 and note the title). Doeg may have entered the service of Saul after the Israelite campaign against Edom (14:47).

- 8] And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.
- 9] And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it *is here* wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take *it*: for *there is* no other save that here. And David said, *There is* none like that; give it me.

He lied to Achish (21:10–15).

- 10] And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

“Achish”: or, *Abimelech* (AV, marg.). The headnote to Psalm 34 refers to the king of Gath by this standing title, “Abimelech.” David fled to the hometown of the dead Philistine hero Goliath!

- 11] And the servants of Achish said unto him, *Is* not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?
- 12] And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

Matters were going from bad to worse, just as they always do when we trust ourselves instead of the wisdom of God. David had now fled into the hands of the enemy!

“The fear of man brings a snare,” and David almost snared himself right in enemy territory! David had to pretend to be out of his mind before he could escape.

“O what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.”

- 13] And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.

“...scabbled”: or, “made meaningless marks”. The LXX reads, *beat or drummed*, from a word which sounds like (but is not written like) the Hebrew for “scrabble.”

- 14] Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore *then* have ye brought him to me?

“...is mad”: or, “playeth the mad man.”

- 15] Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this *fellow* to play the mad man in my presence? shall this *fellow* come into my house?

He then fled to the cave of Adullam and organized his “outlaw band.”

See Ps 34 and Ps 56. [It is amazing how men and women of faith can gradually become men and women of fear and unbelief. If we get in a hurry, trust people, and trust our own plans, before long everything falls to pieces and we find ourselves out of the place of God’s blessing and protection. We shall see in later chapters that David learned to wait on the Lord and seek His will.]

David is now completely separated from Saul’s court and is considered an outlaw and a rebel. Psalm 34 grew out of his narrow escape from Achish.

*Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.*

Ps 34:19, NKJV

## 1 Samuel 22 God Guided David’s Steps

David assembled a loyal band of followers at the cave of Adullam, a crowd of 400 men that eventually grew to 600 (23:13). His experiences in the cave are found in Ps 54 and 142.

- 1] David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father’s house heard *it*, they went down thither to him.

That is, from their home to Bethlehem. The whole clan apparently joined David in exile. In the East it is not uncommon for a whole family to be put to death for the fault of one member, and the massacre at Nob showed David’s family what they might expect. David was able to get protection for his parents at Moab since his family (through Ruth) came from there. How thoughtful of David to care for his loved ones; Cf. John 19:26–27.

- 2] And every one *that was* in distress, and every one that *was* in debt, and every one *that was* discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

“...was in debt”: Heb. “had a creditor.”

“...discontented”: Heb. “bitter of soul.”

Certainly this “motley crew” illustrates the kind of people who flee to Christ for refuge: people in distress or in debt (because of our sins); people discontented with life. David’s band was small and despised, *but to them belonged the kingdom!*

- 3] And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, *and be* with you, till I know what God will do for me.  
4] And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold.  
5] And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

This Gad is here mentioned for the first time. He later became David’s seer (2 Sam 24:11). He rebuked David for his sin of the census and wrote a history of the reign of David (1 Chr 29:29). From 2 Chr 29:25 it appears that he was concerned with the arrangement of the temple service.

- 6] When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that *were* with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants *were* standing about him;)

“...tree...”: or, “grove in a high place.”

Here is a vivid description of an ancient council, such as met to deliberate on affairs of state and to administer justice.

- 7] Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, *and* make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds;

“Ye Benjamites” shows how isolated the tribes still were, and that for the most part Saul was surrounded by members of his own tribe. Saul apparently had no palace and no elaborate court. His men were strictly Benjamites.

“Will the son of Jesse give”: He implied that David would be as narrow in his tribal affiliations. However, as it turned out, David went the other way and risked losing the loyalty of Judah.

- 8] That all of you have conspired against me, and *there is* none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and *there is* none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

“...sheweth...”: Heb. “uncovereth mine ear.”

- 9] Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.  
10] And he enquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.  
11] Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father’s house, the priests that *were* in Nob: and they came all of them to the king.  
12] And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I *am*, my lord.

“Here...”: Heb. “Behold me.”

- 13] And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast enquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?  
14] Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who *is so* faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king’s son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?  
15] Did I then begin to enquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute *any* thing unto his servant, *nor* to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.

“...less...”: Heb. “little or great.”

- 16] And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father’s house.

- 17] And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; because their hand also *is* with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD.

“...footmen”: or, “guard”: Heb. “runners.”

- 18] And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod.

So, Doeg slew on that infamous day eighty-five ephod-bearing men, priests of full status, each qualified to give oracles by the use of the ephod.

- 19] And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

The edge of the sword: literally, *according to the mouth of the sword*. The ancients often designed a sword to resemble an animal, with the blade of the sword representing a tongue and the two sides of the haft resembling lips.

In the madness of his self-willed fury, Saul wreaked upon an innocent city, within the confines of his own tribe, the vengeance he had failed to execute upon the Amalekites, a guilty heathen nation at the command of God (15:3). (However, this slaughter was a fulfillment of God’s prophecy to Eli that his house would be judged; see 2:30–36.)

Saul’s murder of the innocent priests at Nob shows to what extent people will go once they have rejected the Lord. Saul was a liar and a murderer, just like Satan (Jn 8:44).

Doeg was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau (Gen 25:30), so his hatred for David and the priests is but another stage in the battle between Esau and Jacob.

David’s presence at Nob brought death to these people, so his deception only resulted in tragedy.

- 20] And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David.



## 1 Samuel 23

### God Guarded David's Life

Abiathar, one of the sons of Ahimelech, probably left in charge of the sanctuary at Nob, escaped the massacre and fled with the sacred ephod (23:6) to David at Adullam. He shared in all David's wanderings and was made by him joint priest with Zadok.

This marked the beginning of David's priestly staff which would later lead the tabernacle worship in Jerusalem. Later he backed Adonijah's quest for the throne and was deported by Solomon to Anathoth. Jeremiah may have been a descendant of this family.

- 21] And Abiathar shewed David that Saul had slain the LORD'S priests.
- 22] And David said unto Abiathar, I knew *it* that day, when Doeg the Edomite *was* there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned *the death* of all the persons of thy father's house.
- 23] Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou *shalt be* in safeguard.

Saul was able to slay the priests, but he was not able to prevent Abiathar from fleeing to David with the ephod, the instrument for determining the will of God. [What use had Saul for the ephod? He was determined to do his own will!]

Abiathar later became a help to David; see 23:9; 30:7.

This period of persecution in David's life was a part of the preparation for the throne. He was already a great soldier; now he needed to suffer in the wilderness to learn *not to trust men* but to trust the Lord.

All of us need "wilderness testings" to bring us closer to the Lord and to make us better equipped to serve Him.

Saul's persecution of David is an illustration of the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. It also pictures Satan's persecution of the church today:

Saul was not the king, yet he was reigning;  
David was the king, but he was not yet on the throne.

Satan seems to be "reigning" today, but Christ is King and one day He will take His rightful throne.

It was important that David live, for it was he who would deliver Israel, establish the kingdom in glory, and become the father of Christ in the flesh (Rom 1:3).

### Victory at Keilah (vv. 1–13)

- 1] Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshingfloors.

Keilah was a city in the Shephelah, a place of importance in the time of Nehemiah (Neh 3:17, 18). It is mentioned in the Tell el Amarna letters as *Kila*. Today it is a city of ruins, but the terraced hillsides bear testimony to its grain-growing capacity, which the Philistines envied.

The Philistines robbed the threshing floors to reduce Israel to submission by starvation. In the East, to this day, the main source of food supply remains—bread.

- 2] Therefore David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.

The Philistines were David's enemy and the enemy of Israel, so it was right for him to fight them. As long as David sought the mind of the Lord, God gave him protection and victory.

- 3] And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?
- 4] Then David enquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.
- 5] So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.
- 6] And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, *that* he came down *with* an ephod in his hand.
- 7] And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.

So intense was Saul's hatred that he did not thank God for David's victory, but instead came to fight the victor himself.

- 8] And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.
- 9] And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.
- 10] Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake.
- 11] Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down.
- 12] Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver *thee* up.

“...deliver”: Heb. “shut up.”

And the men of Keilah did not protect their deliverer; rather, they tried to turn him over to Saul! How wicked is the human heart untouched by the grace of God!

- 13] Then David and his men, *which were* about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbore to go forth.

### Victory in the wilderness (vv. 14–18)

What patience David had, to be able to endure daily danger and persecution! He was a master strategist and could have tricked Saul into defeat, but he preferred to wait for God to give the victory.

- 14] And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.

The wilderness was a wild uncultivated tract lying between the mountains of Judah and the Dead Sea. It begins in about the longitude of Maon and Carmel and becomes wilder and more desolate as it descends toward the Dead Sea. In Josh 15:61, 62 six cities are mentioned as existing in this desolate region.

David’s chief abode was Ziph, which lay about halfway between Hebron and Carmel, in one of the many caves of this limestone rock region.

- 15] And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David *was* in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

“Ziph in a wood” is a conspicuous mound, 2,882 feet above the sea, four miles southeast of Hebron, on a plateau of red, rolling ground. The plateau is mostly bare, though partly covered with wheat and barley. It is broken, here and there, by limestone scraps partly covered by scrub, and it is honeycombed by caves, which commence near Hebron.

- 16] And Jonathan Saul’s son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

(Jonathan died a soldier’s death, fighting gallantly for his country, before anything happened to disturb the perfect beauty of his friendship for David.)

- 17] And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.
- 18] And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

How moving it was when Jonathan met him in the wilderness (at the risk of his own life) to reassure him and encourage him. (Sad to say, Jonathan was never allowed to reign with David, for he was slain in battle with his father. The righteous often suffer because of the sins of others.)

### Victory over the Ziphites (vv. 19–29)

- 19] Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which *is* on the south of Jeshimon?

“...on...”: Heb. “on the right hand.”

“Jeshimon”: or, “the wilderness.”

Ziph was in Judah and its inhabitants should have been loyal to David; but instead they betrayed their rightful king to Saul. (The reason for the Ziphites’ betrayal was either their zeal for Saul or the fact that David levied protection money against them as he did against Nabal (ch. 25).) Read Ps. 54 for David’s prayer to God for deliverance.

- 20] Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part *shall be* to deliver him into the king’s hand.
- 21] And Saul said, Blessed *be* ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me.
- 22] Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, *and* who hath seen him there: for it is told me *that* he dealeth very subtilly.

“...haunt...”: Heb. “foot shall be.”

- 23] See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.
- 24] And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men *were* in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon.
- 25] Saul also and his men went to seek *him*. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard *that*, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.

“...into...”: or, “from the rock.”

- 26] And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.

The rock stood between David and Saul, just as the cloud stood between Israel and the Egyptians.

- 27] But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land.

“...invaded...”: Heb. “spread themselves upon, etc.” It seemed that Saul would finally capture his man, but an invasion from the Philistines forced Saul to return home. Certainly God is in control of circumstances and delivers His own at the right time.

- 28] Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Selahammahlekoth.

“Selahammahlekoth”: that is, “the rock of divisions.”

- 29] And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at En Gedi.

En Gedi, an oasis 10 miles north of Masada on the eastern edge of the desert of Judah. It is 600 feet above the Dead Sea, and from the limestone rock a copious stream plunges toward the sea. There are five or six waterfalls en route, the stream skipping like a goat from one ledge to another; hence the name “The Fountain of the Kid.” In the days of Abraham, the city of Hazezon-tamar stood on this site. En Gedi is still an oasis in the limestone desert, and though palm trees and vineyards have vanished, the petrified leaves found there and the terraces cut in the hills attest its ancient fertility. A small Jewish kibbutz is at present located at En Gedi.

## 1 Samuel 24 God Gave David Grace

*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*

Prov 16:32

### The Temptation (vv. 1–7)

- 1] And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David *is* in the wilderness of En Gedi.

“...following”: Heb. “after.”

- 2] Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

(We still see these each time we visit there.)

- 3] And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where *was* a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

“Sheepcotes”: rough stone walls built at the entrances to the caves to protect the sheep from wild beasts and to serve for shelter in case of bad weather.

“Cover his feet”: a euphemism. Saul came into the cave to rest and relieve himself, probably laying his outer garment down as he entered. The cave was large and very dark, so he did not see David and his men hiding in the rocks.

- 4] And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe privily.

“...Saul’s...”: Heb. “the robe which was Saul’s.”

Saul had probably laid aside his robe upon entering the cave. This enabled David to cut off a piece of it unobserved. Certainly this could have been the time to kill his enemy! In fact, some of David’s men insisted that God had arranged the circumstances so that David might so act. It is important that we *always test* circumstances by the Word of God.

- 5] And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

קַנָּף *kanaph*: "extremity, edge, border, skirt, corner (of garment), hem, fringe, bottom edge of skirt or train."

## Hems

In ancient Mesopotamia, "to cut off the hem" was to strip one of his personality, authority, etc. A husband could divorce his wife by cutting off the hem of her robe. A nobleman would authenticate his name on a clay tablet by pressing his hem on the clay. Cf. the "train" (*shawl*) of God on His Throne; Isa 6:1; God's Covenant with Israel: Ezek 16:8; Ex 39:25,26; fringes on Levitical garments: Num 15:38,39; Deut 22:12; Ex 28:33,34.

Lord's hem sought for healing: Mt 14:36; Mk 6:56; Lk 8:44. Goal of the woman with issue of blood: Mt 9:20-21; Mk 5:31. [Same "age" as Jairus' daughter: 12 yrs. Gentile woman = Type of the Church?] Ruth & Boaz: a request to exercise his right and responsibility. Ruth 3:9.

- 6] And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD.

David repented openly of his rash deed of cutting Saul's robe; for he had not shown proper respect for the Lord's anointed. David, "a man after God's own heart," was willing for God to take care of Saul (Rom 12:19-21).

- 7] So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on *his* way.

"...stayed": Heb. "cut off."

## The Explanation (vv. 8-15)

- 8] David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

David and his men were safe in the cave; but then David boldly stepped out to speak to Saul once the king had gone some distance away.

- 9] And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

- 10] Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and *some* bade *me* kill thee: but *mine eye* spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he *is* the LORD'S anointed.
- 11] Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that *there is* neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.
- 12] The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.
- 13] As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.
- 14] After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.
- 15] The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

"...deliver": Heb. "judge."

How shocked Saul must have been to hear the voice of his son-in-law! David explained that Saul was listening to lies (v. 9) and that he could have lost his life in the cave but for David's kindness (vv. 10-11).

The piece of the robe was evidence enough that David was telling the truth.

## The Supplication (vv. 16-22)

- 16] And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is* this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

Picture the pitiful Saul as he stands before one who is his better. Saul's weeping and his admission of guilt were but shallow, passing emotions; they did not really come from his heart. He was only too glad to acknowledge David's kindness. After all, David had spared his life!

- 17] And he said to David, Thou *art* more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.
- 18] And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

"...delivered": Heb. "shut up."

- 19] For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

20] And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.

(Verse 20 indicates the perversity of Saul's heart: he admitted that David was the rightful king, yet he persisted in opposing him!)

21] Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

Saul was concerned primarily for his own family, that, when David did become king, he would not slay them. David kept his promises to Saul and even vindicated Saul's honor after Saul's death. This beautifully illustrates Christ's words in Mt 5:10–12. For David to show kindness to Saul, and to pray for him, was a greater victory than to overcome the Philistines. *We can be sure, if we obey the Lord, that He will take care of our enemies for us in His good time.*

22] And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

God gave David the grace needed to show kindness to his enemy, and this is an even greater event than defeating the giant Goliath. Saul's men had been lying about David and telling Saul that David was trying to slay him (24:9). (If Psalm 7 fits into this event, as many believe, then Cush the Benjamite was chief of the liars. This experience gave David opportunity to prove to Saul and the leaders that he was *not* trying to slay Saul, but that he honored the king even though the king was out of the will of God.)

## 1 Samuel 25

1] And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

All Israel sent delegates to the funeral service. And Samuel was laid to rest in the family estate at Ramah, the city of his birth, judgeship, and death. Paran was the desert that separated Palestine from the Sinai Peninsula.

2] And *there was* a man in Maon, whose possessions *were* in Carmel; and the man *was* very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

“...possessions”: or, “business.”

Nabal's home was in Maon, and his place of business was about a mile north of Carmel.

3] Now the name of the man *was* Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and *she was* a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man *was* churlish and evil in his doings; and he *was* of the house of Caleb.

“Nabal”: The name means *fool*.

4] And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep.  
5] And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name:

“...greet...”: Heb. “ask him in my name of peace.”

6] And thus shall ye say to him that liveth *in prosperity*, Peace *be* both to thee, and peace *be* to thine house, and peace *be* unto all that thou hast.  
7] And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel.

“...hurt”: Heb. “shamed.” “Hurt them not”: David contrasted the strict discipline maintained by him with the usual license of similar roving bands, and asked that some acknowledgment of this should be made by the wealthy farmer.

This species of “protection money” is regularly levied at the present day by the Bedouins living on the borders of the desert and the cultivated land. In return for gifts, they guarantee the protection of life and property in these notoriously insecure districts.

8] Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David.  
9] And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased.

“...ceased”: Heb. “rested.”

10] And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who *is* David? and who *is* the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.



David's retinue included many runaway slaves, as well as men who had abandoned the service of Saul. Nabal looked upon David as a mere runaway slave.

- 11] Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give *it* unto men, whom I know not whence they *be*?

“flesh”: Heb. “slaughter.”

- 12] So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.  
13] And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff.

By carrying out his intention, he would have sinned against the Lord and against his people. But the Lord preserved him from this sin. Just at the right time, Abigail, the intelligent and pious wife of Nabal, heard of the affair and was able to appease the wrath of David by her immediate and kindly interposition.

- 14] But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.

“railed”: Heb. “...flew upon them; It is the same word as *יָיַט* *yayt*, “fly,” from which *ayit*, “a bird of prey,” and Greek *aetos*, “eagle,” are derived.

- 15] But the men *were* very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields:

“...hurt”: Heb. “shamed.”

- 16] They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.  
17] Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he *is such* a son of Belial, that *a man* cannot speak to him.  
18] Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched *corn*, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid *them* on asses.

“...clusters”: or, “lumps.”

- 19] And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.

- 20] And it was *so, as* she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them.  
21] Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this *fellow* hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *pertained* unto him: and he hath required me evil for good.  
22] So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that *pertain* to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.  
23] And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,  
24] And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, *upon me let this iniquity be*: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

“...audience”: Heb. “ears.”

- 25] Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, *even* Nabal: for as his name *is*, so *is* he; Nabal *is* his name, and folly *is* with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.

“Nabal”: that is, “Fool.” *Fool* is an inadequate rendering. The Hebrew words for “fool” and “folly” denote not mere stupidity, but moral perversity. The word in Hebrew suggests one who is insensible to the claims both of God and of man, and who is consequently at once irreligious and churlish.

- 26] Now therefore, my lord, *as* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.

“avenging...”: Heb. “saving thyself.”

- 27] And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.

“...blessing”: or, “present.”

“follow...”: Heb. “walk at the feet of, etc.”

- 28] I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee *all* thy days.

Abigail was as certain of David's rise to kingship as was Rahab certain of Israel's conquest of Canaan (Josh 2:9-13). In spite of David's misfortunes at court, the average citizen expected his tide to turn. Many looked upon him in his exile as the hope of Israel.

29] Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, *as out* of the middle of a sling.

“...in the bundle of life”: This saying has long been applied to life beyond the grave, and its initial Hebrew letters are today found on almost every Jewish tombstone. This beautiful metaphor is taken from the custom of binding up valuable things in a bundle to prevent their being injured. The figure is that of a precious jewel carefully tied up (Gen 42:35).

The converse follows in the prayer that the lives of David’s enemies might be cast away “like the stones from a sling.”

30] And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel;

31] That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

“...no grief”: Heb. “no staggering, or, stumbling.”

“Shed blood causeless”: Abigail’s argument was that any shedding of blood at this point would work against David’s program. It would start a blood feud among the clans of Judah that would involve men David needed to support his bid for kingship. David had only Judah to back him in the quest for the throne. In addition, Abigail argued, David’s conscience would trouble him if blood flowed needlessly.

32] And David said to Abigail, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:

33] And blessed *be* thy advice, and blessed *be* thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

34] For in very deed, *as* the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.

35] So David received of her hand *that* which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

36] And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal’s heart *was* merry within him, for he *was* very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light.

37] But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became *as* a stone.

38] And it came to pass about ten days *after*, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.

39] And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed *be* the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife.

40] And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife.

41] And she arose, and bowed herself on *her* face to the earth, and said, Behold, *let* thine handmaid *be* a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.

42] And Abigail hastened, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife.

“...after her”: Heb. “at her feet.”

43] David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives. David married Ahinoam, mother of Amnon, before he married Abigail.

In the lists of David’s wives, Ahinoam is always mentioned first.

44] But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David’s wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which *was* of Gallim.

“Phalti”: “Phaltiel.” Gallim is mentioned in the neighborhood of Anathoth in Benjamin (Isa 10:30).

## 1 Samuel 26

We come now to the tragic end of Saul’s life. The man who “stood higher than any of the people” (10:23) will now fall to the earth in a witch’s house (28:20) and then fall dead on the battlefield (see 2 Sam 1:19). Perhaps the best way to study these sad events is to notice the obvious contrasts between David and Saul.

1] And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, *which is* before Jeshimon?

Why David returned to the wilderness of Ziph when he had experienced trouble there before, is difficult to understand (23:19ff). Perhaps it’s just an illustration that he, like all men of clay, made mistakes.

2] Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

Of course, Saul pursued David: Saul's tearful confession in 24:17–21 was empty hypocrisy.

- 3] And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which *is* before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.
- 4] David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed.
- 5] And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.

“...trench”: or, “midst of his carriages.”

- 6] Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee.

The Hittites are mentioned repeatedly in the OT as one of the nations to be driven out of Canaan. Their empire, centered in Asia Minor, came to an end about 1200 B.C. Subsequently, powerful Hittite city states maintained themselves in northern Syria, notably at Carchemish on the Euphrates and Kadesh on the Orontes. These were destroyed by the Assyrians in the eighth century.

Abishai was David's nephew (1 Chr 2:15–16) and was a courageous warrior (2 Sam 10:10) and remained faithful to David in Absalom's rebellion. (Later, Abishai was to save David's life from the giant (2 Sam 21:17). Yet, Abishai was involved in the murder of Abner (2 Sam 3:30), a crime that grieved David.

- 7] So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him.

God put a deep sleep upon the camp (v. 12) so David and his nephew were not in danger. The word “trench” in v. 7 indicates a barricade of baggage and wagons.

- 8] Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not *smite* him the second time.

“...delivered”: Heb. “shut up.”

Saul had previously attempted to transfix David with his javelin. Now Abishai wanted to transfix Saul with his spear. But David refused to let him touch the Lord's anointed. Vengeance was in the hands of the Lord.

- 9] And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?
- 10] David said furthermore, *As* the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.
- 11] The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that *is* at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.
- 12] So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw *it*, nor knew *it*, neither awaked: for they *were* all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

This was a slumber so profound and unnatural that it was regarded as sent directly from the Lord. (The same term is used for the sleep of Adam while the Lord created Eve from a rib taken from Adam's side, and upon Abraham during the Covenant Ritual in Genesis 15).

- 13] Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space *being* between them:
- 14] And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who *art* thou *that* criest to the king?
- 15] And David said to Abner, *Art* not thou a *valiant* man? and who *is* like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord.
- 16] This thing *is* not good that thou hast done. *As* the LORD liveth, ye *are* worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD'S anointed. And now see where the king's spear *is*, and the cruse of water that *was* at his bolster.

“...worthy to die”: Heb. “the sons of death.”

After crossing the ravine opposite Saul, David shouted to Abner, who supposedly guarded Saul, and tauntingly chided him for his carelessness in allowing the king's spear and water jug to be taken.

- 17] And Saul knew David's voice, and said, *Is* this thy voice, my son David? And David said, *It is* my voice, my lord, O king.
- 18] And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil *is* in mine hand?
- 19] Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if *they be* the children of men, cursed *be* they before the LORD; for they have driven

me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods.

“...accept”: Heb. “smell.”

“...abiding”: Heb. “cleaving.”

The idea here is that if it was the Lord’s prompting that led Saul to pursue him, David would seek God’s pardon by a suitable expiatory offering. David recognized the legitimacy of Saul’s intention but offered to atone for any sin on his part. This was going more than halfway. The second half of the verse suggests that possibly men were seeking to set up human barriers between Saul and David. If this was the case, David pled for their just punishment.

- 20] Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

David’s message to Saul was actually a plea for him to return to the Lord. “If God has led you to pursue me because of some sin in my life, then I will offer a sacrifice with you and get the matter settled,” he said. “But if men are cursing me, then you can be sure God will settle the matter for me.”

- 21] Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

Listen to Saul’s empty confession in v. 21: “I have sinned! I have played the fool!” Yes, he had—but he still did not repent!

We play the fool

when we run ahead of the Lord (13:8ff);

when we fail to obey completely (chap. 15);

when we turn our back on our godly friends (David & Samuel);

when we seek guidance from the devil (chap. 28); and

when we refuse to repent even when we know we are wrong.

“Be sure your sins will find you out!”

- 22] And David answered and said, Behold the king’s spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it.
- 23] The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into *my* hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD’S anointed.

- 24] And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.
- 25] Then Saul said to David, Blessed *be* thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great *things*, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

So far as can be determined Saul became resigned to his fate and never again tried to interfere with the will of God for the kingdom and its next anointed leader.

\* \* \*

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) List the lies David told while on the run as a fugitive.
- 2) How was Saul’s slaughter of the priests a fulfillment of prophecy?
- 3) How was Saul’s confession to David empty?

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) Was David’s lying justified? How could God continue to bless him?
- 2) How was Saul an illustration of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit?
- 3) In what way to we, too, like Saul, play the fool through empty confessions, getting ahead of the Lord, etc.?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Lay out the plan of the tabernacle, and describe each of the seven elements of furniture and explain their spiritual significance, and their prophetic typology of Christ.
- 2) Trace examples where a hem was a symbol of rank (in both the Old and New Testaments).

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read the rest of 1 Samuel.

### Session 8 1 Samuel 27 - 31

#### 1 Samuel 27

- 1] And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: *there is* nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.

Though Saul at long last had decided that further pursuit of David was fruitless because the Lord had ordained him for the throne, David did not know this. So he reluctantly left Judah to find refuge among the Philistines.

This move accomplished two important objectives:

- a) it delivered him from any possible danger from Saul, and
- b) it ingratiated him with the Philistines so he had no further need to fear them.

No less important, this 16-month (v. 7) respite (from the time of his Philistine sojourn until the death of Saul) gave him opportunity to develop even further his combat and leadership skills. He needed this time to stabilize himself in view of what he knew must be the soon end of Saul's dynasty and the beginning of his own.

He had gotten into trouble there before (21:10–15), but now he was the leader of a strong band of 600 men and his reception was much better. *However*, David's sojourn in enemy territory forced him to lie to the king (27:10–12), and when the Philistines did gather (29:1), David was almost forced to fight against his own people! It was only the grace of God that kept David from having to slay his own people.

- 2] And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that *were* with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath.  
3] And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his

household, *even* David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife.

So after many years of running from Saul, David finally led his immediate family and 600 followers (27:2; cf. 23:13; 30:9; 2 Sam. 15:18) to Gath and threw himself on the mercy of Achish, a Philistine ruler. David had tried this before (1 Sam 21:10-15), but that was early in the period of his estrangement from Saul. At that time David was feared by Achish and barely escaped with his life. But now it was clear to all that David was Saul's mortal enemy and that David could even be useful to the Philistines in their ongoing struggle with Israel.

- 4] And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him.  
5] And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?

In a district of his own, David could observe his own religious rites as a worshiper of Jehovah and not be under the constant surveillance of the king.

- 6] Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day.  
7] And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months.  
8] And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gerzites, and the Amalekites: for those *nations were* of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt.  
9] And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish.  
10] And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites.

“Whither...”: or, “Did you not make a road, etc.”

South: The Negev. Literally, *the dry country*. It was the name of the waterless district to the south of Jerusalem, between the hills of Judah and the actual desert.

- 11] And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring *tidings* to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so *will be* his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines.



12] And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

“...utterly...”: Heb. “to stink.”

## 1 Samuel 28

- 1] And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men.
- 2] And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.

David’s reply was ambiguous. The words, “what thy servant can do,” contained no distinct promise of faithful assistance in the war with the Israelites. The expression thy servant was simply the ordinary form for speaking of oneself to a superior.

### Saul and the Witch of Endor

- 3] Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

“Familiar spirits”: יִדְדֵי יְדֹעִים *yidde’oniyim* means those in touch with the diviner. One who divined by the *yidde’oniyim* consulted only the particular spirit which was his familiar.

Samuel was dead, but even when he was alive, his ministry was not really appreciated by Saul. [How sad when people discover their real friends too late.]

- 4] And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.
- 5] And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

Saul may have camped on the same ground where Gideon and his men camped. The spring by which Gideon pitched is called “the well of Harod” (Judges 7:1), i.e., *the Spring of Trembling*. Saul camped beside the same spring and “trembled greatly.”

- 6] And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.
- 7] Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, *there is* a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.

A number of stern passages warn against any involvement with or practice of these satanic arts.

- Deuteronomy 18:9–12 includes these practices in a list of nine abominations that stand in opposition to revelation from God through his prophets.
- Exodus 22:18 denies sorceresses the right to live.
- Leviticus 19:26, 31 and 20:6, 27 likewise sternly caution against consulting a medium, a sorceress or anyone who practices divination. Those cultivating these arts were to be put to death—the community was not to tolerate them, for what they did was so heinous that it was the very antithesis of the revelation that came from God (Cf. Jer 27:9–10).

Endor was long held in memory by the Jewish people as connected with the great victory of Deborah and Barak over Sisera and Jabin. On the bleak northern slope of *Jebel Duhy* (the Little Hermon), the name still lingers, attached to a once considerable but now deserted village. The rock of this mountain village is hollowed into caves, one of which contains a little fountain and may well have been the scene of the incantation of the witch.

- 8] And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me *him* up, whom I shall name unto thee.

It was a perilous journey of seven or eight miles, over difficult ground, part of which skirted the Philistine encampment.

- 9] And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?
- 10] And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, *As* the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.
- 11] Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.

The question whether the woman:

- a) really possessed the power of communion with the spirits of the dead, or

- b) had deluded herself into believing that she had such power, or
- c) was simply a deliberate impostor, is an endless debate among different writers.

That the spirit of Samuel actually appeared was the view of the ancient rabbis.

*So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it;*

1 Chronicles 10:13

The Septuagint reading of this text adds:

*Saul asked counsel of her that had a familiar spirit to inquire of her, and Samuel made answer to him.*

The same view was held by Justin Martyr, Origen, and Augustine. Tertullian and Jerome maintained that the appearance of Samuel was a diabolical delusion.

It seems likely that:

- 1) Samuel's coming was of the Lord and not because of the witch's art;
- 2) The witch was surprised when Samuel appeared; and
- 3) Samuel came because he had a special message for the king from the Lord.

The witch could not have impersonated Samuel (in league with someone else) since she did not know Saul was coming. Nor is it possible that Satan could have accomplished this feat, since God would not allow Satan to deliver such a weighty message, nor would the Lord put His approval on a practice His Word condemned. The witch becomes a mere spectator once Samuel is on the scene.

- 12] And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou *art* Saul.
- 13] And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

Notice that Saul does not *see* Samuel.

- 14] And he said unto her, What form *is* he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he *is* covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground, and bowed himself.

“What...”: Heb. “What is his form?”

What seems to have convinced Saul was the witch's description of Samuel's appearance: She reported that Samuel was wearing the characteristic “robe” מְיֵיל *me'iyil*. That was the very robe Saul had seized and ripped as Samuel declared that the kingdom had been ripped out of his hand (1 Sam 15:27–28).

It is likely that Saul heard Samuel's words (v. 20) but did not *see* Samuel's form (vv. 12–14). Back in 15:35 and 16:1, Samuel's separation from Saul had been accomplished and the king would “*see*” him no more.

- 15] And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

The more modern orthodox commentators are almost unanimous in the opinion that the departed prophet did really appear and announce the coming destruction of Saul and his army. They hold, however, that Samuel was brought up not by the magical arts of the witch, but through a miracle wrought by the omnipotence of God.

- 16] Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?

This word for enemy is an Aramaic form, found only in one or two other places in Hebrew: The LXX renders this, *has come to be on the side of thy neighbor*; The Vulgate, *has passed over to thy rival*; The Targum, *has become the help of man who is thine enemy*. The LXX reading is probably preferred.

- 17] And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, *even* to David:
- 18] Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.
- 19] Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow *shalt* thou and thy sons *be* with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.
- 20] Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.

“fell...”: Heb. “made haste, and fell with the fulness of his stature.” Exhausted as he was by fasting, Saul fainted from the shock of hearing his doom pronounced.

It is almost unbelievable that King Saul, a man chosen by God, could ever participate in so wicked a deed; yet the record is there—“let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12).

Saul walked in darkness, not in light; he disguised himself (yet was actually revealing his true character); he allowed a woman to break the law; he brought shame and defeat upon his nation, his army, his family, and himself.

- 21] And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me.
- 22] Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way.
- 23] But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed.

“Bed”: Probably the platform running along the wall, which in the East serves for a seat by day and a bed by night.

- 24] And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded *it*, and did bake unleavened bread thereof:
- 25] And she brought *it* before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

## 1 Samuel 29 David Spared Fighting with the Philistines

- 1] Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which *is* in Jezreel.
- 2] And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rereward with Achish.

The lords of the Philistines were the supreme civil authorities, but they were not army commanders. This division of civil and military authority predates the Roman system of government division of power.

- 3] Then said the princes of the Philistines, What *do* these Hebrews *here*? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, *Is* not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell *unto me* unto this day?
- 4] And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? *should it not be* with the heads of these men?
- 5] *Is* not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?
- 6] Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, *as* the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host *is* good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favour thee not.

“...the lords...”: Heb. thou art not good in the eyes of the lords.”

- 7] Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines.

“...displease...”: Heb. “do not evil in the eyes of the lords.”

- 8] And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?
- 9] And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou *art* good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle.
- 10] Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master’s servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart.
- 11] So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

## 1 Samuel 30 The Return to Ziklag

- 1] And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

From the probable site of Aphek in the Sharon to the probable site of Ziklag is about seventy miles. David and his men must have returned by forced marches.

- 2] And had taken the women captives, that *were* therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried *them* away, and went on their way.

The captives were probably intended for sale as slaves in the markets of Egypt.

- 3] So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, *it was* burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.  
4] Then David and the people that *were* with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.  
5] And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.  
6] And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

“...grieved”: Heb. “bitter.”

- 7] And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David.  
8] And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake *them*, and without fail recover *all*.

The contrast between chapters 28 and 30 is striking: Saul had departed from the Lord and therefore had no divine guidance (28:6), while David looked to the Lord for courage and direction (30:6–9). “Seek the Lord while He may be found” (Isa. 55:6, NIV) was a warning Saul did not heed. God enabled David not only to recover all his possessions and people, but also to gather the loot collected by the enemy.

- 9] So David went, he and the six hundred men that *were* with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed.

This may be the *Wadi esh-Sheri' ah*, four or five miles south of the proposed site of Ziklag. The Hebrew word for brook is *nahal*, which means a ravine, or the bed of a torrent, with a stream at the bottom.

- 10] But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.

From the forced march from Aphek to Ziklag, and the immediate pursuit without rest. The warriors were “dead beat.” (The word faint is used here and in verse 21 with a noun meaning “a corpse.”)

- 11] And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water;  
12] And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk *any* water, three days and three nights.  
13] And David said unto him, To whom *belongest* thou? and whence *art* thou? And he said, I *am* a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick.

The life of a sick slave was of little more importance than that of a crippled horse.

- 14] We made an invasion *upon* the south of the Cherethites, and upon *the coast* which *belongeth* to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire.

Cherethites were possibly connected with Crete (Caphtor), the country from which the Philistines were believed to have come (Amos 9:7) .

“Coast of Judah”: The eastern portion of the Negev belonged to Judah. One part of it belonged to the family of Caleb, and was called Caleb's Negev (25:3; cf. Josh 15:13).

- 15] And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company.  
16] And when he had brought him down, behold, *they were* spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah.  
17] And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.

“...the next...: Heb. “their morrow.”

- 18] And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives.  
19] And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any *thing* that they had taken to them: David recovered all.  
20] And David took all the flocks and the herds, *which* they drave before those *other* cattle, and said, This *is* David's spoil.

David's motive in choosing the sheep and oxen for himself is evident from verses 26-31. They were the most acceptable presents he could make to his friends in Judah in exchange for security from the men of Saul and to promote his cause in their midst.

21] And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that *were* with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them.

“...saluted...”: or, “asked them how they did.”

22] Then answered all the wicked men and *men* of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them *ought* of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead *them* away, and depart.

23] Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand.

24] For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part *is* that goeth down to the battle, so *shall* his part *be* that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.

(According to Polybius (X. 16.5), Scipio, after the sack of New Carthage, directed the Roman tribunes to divide the booty in equal portions to all, including the reserves, the guards of the camp, and the sick.)

25] And it was *so* from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.

26] And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, *even* to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD;

27] To *them* which *were* in Bethel, and to *them* which *were* in south Ramoth, and to *them* which *were* in Jattir,

28] And to *them* which *were* in Aroer, and to *them* which *were* in Siphmoth, and to *them* which *were* in Eshtemoa,

Siphmoth is not elsewhere mentioned, but Zabdi, the Shiphmite (1Chr 27:27), who was over David’s wine cellars, was evidently a native of the place.

29] And to *them* which *were* in Rachal, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Kenites,

30] And to *them* which *were* in Hormah, and to *them* which *were* in Chorashan, and to *them* which *were* in Athach,

31] And to *them* which *were* in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

Hebron was known in the days of Abraham as Kirjath-arba. Today it is called El-Khalil, “The Friend,” an abbreviation for “the city of the Friend of God.” (Cf. 2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8; Jas 2:23).

## 1 Samuel 31 Saul Slain at Gilboa

1] Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

“...slain”: or, “wounded.”

Four memorable battles were fought in this area:

- **The battle of Kishon**, in which Deborah and Barak defeated the hosts of Sisera (Judges 4:15; 5:21).
- **The battle of Jezreel**, in which Gideon’s three hundred defeated the vast hordes of the Midianites (Judges 7).
- **The battle of Mount Gilboa**, recorded here.
- **The battle of Megiddo**, in which Josiah, king of Israel, lost his life fighting against Pharaoh-nechoh (2 Kgs 23:29). [This may have been over the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat. See our briefing package, *The Seat of Mercy*.]

2] And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul’s sons.

3] And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.

The LXX and the Vulgate read, *he was wounded in the abdomen*. The story does imply a wound that prevented his escape.

“...hit...”: Heb. “found him.”

4] Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

[There are only four examples of suicide in the Bible, those of Ahithophel (2 Sam 17:23), Zimri (1 Kgs 16:18), Judas (Mt 27:5), and Saul, here. This doesn’t include Samson, which can be argued was a suicide; nor does it include Adam, who was *not* deceived (1 Tim 2:14) and chose to join Eve in her predicament rather than go on without her! Cf. Eph 5:22-31.]

5] And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.



Cf. 2 Sam. 1:1–10 for another account of the death of Saul. It is not difficult to harmonize the two accounts. Saul saw that he was defeated; he did not want to fall into the hands of the enemy alive, because they would only humiliate him. Therefore, he tried to take his own life by falling on his sword. This, however, did not kill him; and he was yet alive, leaning upon his spear (2 Sam 1:6), when the Amalekite came along and finished the work.

Josephus is among those who reports this:

(371) But his armor bearer not daring to kill his master, he drew his own sword, and placing himself over against its point, he threw himself upon it; and when he could neither run it through him, nor, by leaning against it, make the sword pass through him, he turned him round, and asked a certain young man that stood by, who he was; and when he understood that he was an Amalekite, he desired him to force the sword through him, because he was not able to do it with his own hands, and thereby to procure him such a death as he desired. (372) This the young man did accordingly; and he took the golden bracelet that was on Saul's arm, and his royal crown that was on his head, and ran away.

*Antiquities* 6, 370–72 [xiv.7]<sup>1</sup>

(However, it must be noted that there are those who believe the Amalekite in 2 Sam 1 was not telling the truth, but only giving this story to David to explain why he possessed Saul's royal crown and bracelet. Perhaps he thought that David would reward him because he "did Saul a favor" by killing him.)

There is an important lesson in Saul's death: because Saul refused to slay all of the Amalekites (15), one of them ended up killing him. *The sin that we fail to deal with, eventually causes our downfall.* Saul lost his crown: "Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have that no one take your crown" (Rev 3:11). [Another prominent Amalekite that will emerge later will be Haman, the villain in the Book of Esther.]

- 6] So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together.

How sad that his innocent son, Jonathan, had to suffer because of the father's sins. Had David continued in his office of minister to Saul, he, too, would probably have perished in this battle. God, however, had stationed him in a place of safety, though at the time it seemed one of great peril.

- 7] And when the men of Israel that *were* on the other side of the valley, and *they* that *were* on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.
- 8] And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa.
- 9] And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish *it in* the house of their idols, and among the people.

Probably in retaliation for the treatment given Goliath (17:54).

- 10] And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan.

**The house of Ashtaroth.** This has generally been supposed to be the famous temple of the Phoenician goddess Ashtar Ascalon, mentioned by Herodotus (I. 105) as the most ancient of all temples of the Greek Aphrodite. However, in the excavations of the University Museum of Philadelphia at Bethshan, two important temples built by Ramses II have been discovered, one of Ashtoreth, and one of Resheph. It was probably in this temple of Ashtoreth that Saul's head was placed.

- 11] And when the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul;
- 12] All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there.

Perhaps they feared that the Philistines would remove the bodies and add further insult. Saul had once rescued these people (chap. 11), and this was one way they could repay him. However, cremation, except in the case of criminals (Josh 7:25), was not a normal Hebrew practice. It was practiced by the Philistines and may have been borrowed by the men of Jabesh-gilead.

- 13] And they took their bones, and buried *them* under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

Saul was a hero of tragedy in the classical sense of the term. He had some good features, such as courage, generalship, modesty, and generosity. But he did not have single-minded tenacity; that was his "tragic flaw." Even his pursuit of David was at times halfhearted. He lacked the greatness of the later David. Nevertheless, here, in an exquisite elegy, David laments him as a great figure.

David later put the bones in a tomb (2 Sam 21:12–14). When he later becomes king at Hebron, David will show his appreciation to these brave men for honoring their late king (2 Sam 2:5–7).

Saul’s tragic life and death can teach us many practical lessons:

- 1) great sins often begin as “little matters”—impatience, incomplete obedience, excuse-making;
- 2) Once sin gets hold of people, they go from bad to worse;
- 3) If we are not right with God, we will not get along with God’s people;
- 4) Excuses are no substitute for confessions;
- 5) Natural gifts and abilities mean nothing without the power of God; and,
- 6) There is no substitute for obedience.

\* \* \*

### Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) List six lessons from the life and death of Saul.
- 2) What does the Witch of Endor teach us about the occult?

### Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) Discuss the major lessons you have learned from the life of Saul.
- 2) Where did he fail and why?
- 3) What are dangers of dabbling in the occult?

### Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Identify mediums in the Old and New Testaments, and the lessons learned from their practice.
- 2) Were they fakes or did they really possess supernatural powers?

### Preparation for Next Session:

Read the first five chapters of 2 Samuel. These chapters describe the intrigues leading up to David’s coronation as king of Israel. You will want to read 1 Chr 10:1–14, 11:1–19, and 14:1–8 for parallel accounts.

1 Samuel was really the story of Samuel, the last of the judges, and the transition with the dismal career of Saul. In 2 Samuel we will enjoy the career of the greatest king who, in many ways, is an example to us all.

### Notes:

1. Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, includes index., Ant VI, xiv 7 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1987).

## 2 Samuel Session 1 2 Samuel 1 – 4

### 2 Samuel 1

- 1] Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag;

Though greatly reduced by the Amalekite incendiaries, that town apparently was not so completely sacked and destroyed that David and his six hundred followers, with their families, could still find some accommodation.

### Amalekite’s Tale (2-12)

As the narrative of Saul’s death, given in the last session, was inspired; the Amalekite’s story simply a fiction of his own, invented to ingratiate himself with David, the presumptive successor to the throne. It is unlikely that Saul would have been leaning on his spear, unattended by Israelite warriors, as the Philistine chariots charged him, and had to call on a stranger who just happened to be passing by.

David’s question, “How went the matter?” evinces the deep interest he took in the war, an interest that sprang from feelings of high and generous patriotism, not from views of ambition.

The Amalekite, however, judging him to be actuated by a selfish principle, fabricated a story improbable and inconsistent, which he thought would procure him a reward. Having probably witnessed the suicidal act of Saul, he thought of turning it to his own account, and suffered the penalty of his grievously mistaken calculation (compare 2 Sam 1:9 with 1 Sam 31:4, 5).

- 2] It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and *so* it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance.
- 3] And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel *am* I escaped.
- 4] And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.
- 5] And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead?
- 6] And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.
- 7] And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here *am* I.
- 8] And he said unto me, Who *art* thou? And I answered him, I *am* an Amalekite.
- 9] He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life *is* yet whole in me.

“...anguish...”: or, “my coat of mail (or, my embroidered coat) hindereth me, that my, etc.”

- 10] So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that *was* upon his head, and the bracelet that *was* on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

“...the crown”: a small metallic cap or wreath, which encircled the temples, serving the purpose of a helmet, with a very small horn projecting in front, as the emblem of power.

“...the bracelet that was on his arm”: the armlet worn above the elbow; an ancient mark of royal dignity. It is still worn by kings in some Eastern countries.

- 11] Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that *were* with him:
- 12] And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

[Compare the weeping of Jesus over the fall of Jerusalem, even when it was about to destroy him.]

- 13] And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence *art* thou? And he answered, I *am* the son of a stranger, an Amalekite.

The man had at the outset stated who he was. But the question was now formally and judicially put.

- 14] And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the LORD’S anointed?
- 15] And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, *and* fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

This just punishment of the Amalekite precluded any untrue accusations by David’s political opponents that he might have had a part, directly or indirectly, in the death of Saul. Though David had numerous opportunities to slay Saul, he always regarded him as the Lord’s anointed.

- 16] And David said unto him, Thy blood *be* upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD’S anointed.

David’s reverence for Saul, as the Lord’s anointed, was in his mind a principle on which he had faithfully acted on several occasions of great temptation. In present circumstances it was especially important that his principle should be publicly known; and to free himself from the imputation of being in any way accessory to the execrable crime of regicide was the part of a righteous judge, no less than of a good politician.

## The Song of the Bow

This inimitable pathetic elegy is supposed by many writers to have become a national war song, and to have been taught to the young Israelites under the name of “The Bow.” (Hebrew and many classical writers gave titles to their songs from the principal theme (Ps 22:1; 56:1; 60:1; 80:1; 100:1).

- 17] And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:
- 18] (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah *the use of* the bow: behold, *it is* written in the Book of Jasher.)

Although the words “the use of” are a supplement by our translators, they may be rightly introduced, for the natural sense of this parenthetical

verse is, that David took immediate measures for instructing the people in the knowledge and practice of archery, their great inferiority to the enemy in this military arm having been the main cause of the late national disaster. [The book of Jasher is also mentioned in Josh 10:13 and 1 Kgs 8:53 (LXX). It was a history of the wars of Israel (“Jeshurun”; Deut 32:15). See Bibliography.]

19] The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

Literally, “the gazelle” or “antelope of Israel;” an animal is the chosen type of beauty and symmetrical elegance of form. “How are the mighty fallen!” is his theme (vv. 19, 25, 27).

20] Tell *it* not in Gath, publish *it* not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

21] Ye mountains of Gilboa, *let there be* no dew, neither *let there be* rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, *as though he had not been* anointed with oil.

To be deprived of the genial atmospheric influences which, in those anciently cultivated hills, seem to have reared plenty of first-fruits in the corn harvests, was the greatest calamity the lacerated feelings of the poet could imagine.

To cast away the shield was counted a national disgrace. The shield of Saul is pictured by David as lying upon the mountains, no longer polished and ready to be worn in action, but cast aside as worthless, and neglected. In ancient times, shields, whether made of leather or of metal, were oiled to keep them in good condition. Yet, on that fatal battle of Gilboa, many of the Israelite soldiers, who had displayed unflinching valor in former battles, forgetful of their own reputation and their country’s honor, threw away their shields and fled from the field.

22] From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

23] Saul and Jonathan *were* lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

24] Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with *other* delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

25] How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, *thou wast* slain in thine high places.

26] I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

27] How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

A lesser saint would have rejoiced that his enemy was slain, but David was a man after God’s own heart and felt keenly the tragedy of Saul’s sin. Of course, David’s dear friend Jonathan was also dead; the sin of a disobedient father had brought judgment upon innocent people, including his son.

David’s lamentation is touching; see Prov 24:17. This “Song of the Bow” connects with Jonathan’s use of the bow (1 Sam 20:20ff). There are no unkind words about Saul in this song. David’s chief concern is that the Lord’s anointed has been slain and the Lord’s glory has been dimmed. He is anxious that the unsaved enemy not rejoice over this victory.

In 1 Sam. 10:23, Saul “stood higher” than any other man, but now he had fallen lower than the enemy!

## 2 Samuel 2

We now begin those “political intrigues” that plagued David throughout all his life. Even though David sought the mind of God, he could not escape the plots and plans of others; and because he was indebted to these men, it was difficult for him to oppose them. David’s march to the throne was a difficult one.

1] And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.

### By Urim (1 Sam 23:6, 9).

Hebron really means *brotherhood* (cf. v. 3, cities of Hebron, i.e., a federation of cities). It is now called *El Khalil* (“the friend”), a contraction for *the city of the friend of God*, viz., Abraham. It served as the center of the league or confederation of the clans of Judah and Caleb and those associated with them. It is approximately twenty miles south of Jerusalem, in the region famed in antiquity for its fertile vineyards.

David knew his destination, but he knew also that the providence of God would pave the way. Therefore he would take no step in such a crisis of his own and the nation’s history, without asking and obtaining the divine direction. He was told to go into Judah, and fix his headquarters in Hebron, whither he accordingly repaired with his now considerable force.

There his interests were very powerful; for he was not only within his own tribe, and near chiefs with whom he had been long in friendly relations (see on 1Sam 30:26), but Hebron was the capital and center of Judah, and one of the Levitical cities; the inhabitants of which were strongly attached to him, both from sympathy with his cause ever since the massacre at Nob, and from the prospect of realizing in his person their promised preeminence among the tribes.

- 2] So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite.
- 3] And his men that *were* with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.
- 4] And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, *That* the men of Jabeshgilead *were they* that buried Saul.

The princes of Judah, therefore, offered him the crown over their tribe, and it was accepted. More could not, with prudence, be done in the circumstances of the country (1Chr 11:3).

- 5] And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabeshgilead, and said unto them, Blessed *be ye* of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, *even* unto Saul, and have buried him.

There can be no doubt that this message of thanks for their bold and dangerous enterprise in rescuing the bodies of Saul and his sons was an expression of David's personal and genuine feeling of satisfaction. At the same time, it was a stroke of sound and timely policy: the announcement of his royal power in Judah, accompanied by the pledge of his protection of the men of Jabesh-gilead, should they be exposed to danger for their adventure at Beth-shan, would bear an important significance in all parts of the country. It held out an assurance that he would render them the same timely and energetic support that Saul had given at the beginning of his reign.

- 6] And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.
- 7] Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

## Abner Makes Ishbosheth King over Israel

- 8] But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim;

Abner, the commander of Saul's army, had made Saul's son Ishbosheth the king over the other tribes. He relocated the capital over the Jordan River in Mahanaim to protect himself and the new king from David's men.

"Mahanaim": *Twin camps*, situated on the eastern side of the Jordan, not far from the ford of the Jabbok, was an important place for the execution of Abner's plans, partly from its historical associations (Gen 32:2, 3), and partly from its strategic geographic situation.

"Ish-bosheth—or "Esh-baal" (1Ch 8:33; 9:39): The Hebrews usually changed names ending with Baal into Bosheth ("shame") (compare Jdg 9:53 with 2Sam 11:21). This prince was apparently so called due to his imbecility!

"Abner" was a first cousin of Saul, commander of the forces, and held in high respect throughout the country. Loyalty to the house of his late master was mixed up with opposition to David and views of personal ambition in his originating this factious movement. He, too, was sensitive to the importance of securing the eastern tribes; so, taking Ishbosheth across the Jordan, he proclaimed him king at Mahanaim, a town on the north bank of the Jabbok, hallowed in patriarchal times by the divine presence (Gen 32:2). There he rallied the tribes around the standard of the unfortunate son of Saul.

Of course, Abner had personal interest in the household of Saul since he was Saul's cousin (1 Sam 14:50). It was to his advantage to see Ishbosheth reign, but he was deliberately rebelling against God's Word when he crowned him. God had made it very clear that David alone was to rule Israel.

[Perhaps Christians today are like the Jews of that day: we permit our King to reign over only a *part* of our lives, and the result is conflict and sorrow.]

- 9] And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.

"...over Gilead": used in a loose sense for the land beyond Jordan.

"Ashurites": the tribe of Asher in the extreme north.

"Jezreel": the extensive valley bordering on the central tribes.

- 10] Ishbosheth Saul's son *was* forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.



David neither could nor would force matters. He was content to wait God's time and studiously avoided any collision with the rival king, until, after the lapse of two years, hostilities were threatened from that quarter.

- 11] And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

Ishbosheth is said to have reigned for two years, but David for seven. Probably for the first five years after the fatal battle of Gilboa David alone reigned in the old capital of Judah, Hebron; but the rest of the country was in the Philistines' hands. During these five years Israel gradually regained their country, and at length Abner proclaimed Ishbosheth at Mahanaim beyond Jordan, for security against the Philistines: 2 Sam 2:5-7 confirms this.

- 12] And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

Abner was the son of Ner, who was the brother of Kish, the father of Saul (1 Chr 9:36).

- 13] And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

The pool of Gibeon, six miles northwest of Jerusalem, is known as *el-Jib*. Recent excavations have turned up more than twenty jar handles with the name of the city, Gibeon, inscribed on them.

David sent an army of observation, under the command of Joab, to watch his movements.

- 14] And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise.

Some think that the proposal was only for an exhibition of a little tilting match for diversion. Others suppose that, both parties being reluctant to commence a civil war, Abner proposed to leave the contest to the decision of twelve picked men on either side.

This fight by championship instead of terminating the matter, inflamed the fiercest passions of the two rival parties; a general engagement ensued, in which Abner and his forces were defeated and put to flight.

- 15] Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which *pertained* to Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.  
16] And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and *thrust* his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkathhazzurim, which *is* in Gibeon.

“Helkathhazzurim”: that is, “The field of strong men.”

- 17] And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.  
18] And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel *was as* light of foot as a wild roe.

Zeruiah, David's half-sister, was the mother of the three brothers: Joab, Abishai (called so from Ishai = Jesse), and Asahel “the sons of Zeruiah”; sister of Abigail and of the sons of Jesse (1 Chron. 2:13-17 and 2 Sam. 17:25). Thus, they were David's nephews as well as valued men in his army.

[The father of her three sons is nowhere mentioned, because their more famous mother challenged the greater attention. Josephus preserves a tradition that he was named Souri.<sup>1</sup> Nahash was father of Zeruiah and Abigail. At his death their mother married Jesse, by whom she bore David (2 Sam. 17:25; 1 Chr. 2:16). Therefore Zeruiah and Abigail are called “David's (half) sisters,” but not Jesse's daughters.]

- 19] And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner. {from...: Heb. from after Abner}  
20] Then Abner looked behind him, and said, *Art* thou Asahel? And he answered, *I am*.  
21] And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him.

To gain the general's armor was deemed the grandest trophy. Asahel, ambitious of securing Abner's, had outstripped all other pursuers, and was fast gaining on the retreating commander.

- 22] And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

Abner, conscious of possessing more physical power, and unwilling that there should be “blood” between himself and Joab, Asahel's brother, twice urged him to desist.

23] Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth *rib*, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, *that* as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

The hinder end of the spear was pointed so that it might be stuck into the ground. This explains the fact that the spear passed through the body. The impetuous young soldier was deaf to the generous remonstrance, so the veteran raised the pointed butt of his lance, and with a sudden back thrust, transfixed him on the spot, so that he fell, and lay weltering in his blood.

24] Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that *lieth* before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

But Joab and Abishai continued the pursuit by another route till sunset.

25] And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill.  
26] Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

On reaching a rising ground, and receiving a fresh reinforcement of some Benjamites, Abner rallied his scattered troops and earnestly appealed to Joab's better feelings to stop the further effusion of blood, which, if continued, would lead to more serious consequences—a destructive civil war.

27] And Joab said, *As* God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.  
28] So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

Joab, while upbraiding his opponent as the sole cause of the fray, felt the force of the appeal and led off his men;

29] And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

Abner probably dreading a renewal of the attack when Joab should learn his brother's fate, and vow fierce revenge, endeavored, by a forced march, to cross the Jordan that night.

30] And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel.  
31] But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, *so that* three hundred and threescore men died.

On David's side the loss was only nineteen men, besides Asahel. But of Ish-bosheth's party there fell three hundred and sixty. [This skirmish vividly represented the style of ancient warfare, similar to the classic battles of the Homeric warriors, with the flight of one, the pursuit by another, and the dialogue held between them.]

32] And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which *was in* Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

Abner's murder of Asahel was the prelude to the "long war" between the two kings (3:1). As we shall see, the two remaining brothers avenged this death, much to David's grief.

## 2 Samuel 3 The Murder of Abner

1] Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

The rival parties had varying success, but David's interest steadily increased; less, however, by the fortunes of war, than a growing adherence to him as the divinely designated king.

2] And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

The six sons mentioned had all different mothers.

3] And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;

Chileab—"his father's picture"—called also Daniel (1 Chr 3:1).

Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur—a region in Syria, north of Israel: This marriage seems to have been a political match, made by David, with a view to strengthen himself against Ish-bosheth's party, by the aid of a powerful friend and ally in the north.

The bitter fruits of this alliance with a heathen prince he reaped in the life of the turbulent Absalom.

- 4] And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;
- 5] And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

This addition has led many to think that Eglah was another name for Michal, the *first* and *proper* wife, who, though she had no family after her insolent ridicule of David (2Sam 6:23), might have had a child before.

David's many wives were chosen in direct violation of Deut 17:15–17. Some students believe that this expression of David's lust eventually led to the many family problems that plagued his later days:

Amnon violated his half-sister Tamar (chap. 13);  
Absalom rebelled against David and tried to capture the crown (chaps. 13–18); and  
Adonijah tried to wrest the kingdom from Solomon (1 Kgs 1:5ff).

Abner had problems with lust too; for he took one of Saul's concubines and incurred the displeasure of the pretended king. This led to a disruption between Abner and Ishbosheth.

- 6] And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.
- 7] And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and *Ishbosheth* said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?

The wives and concubines of a king were considered the property of his successor, and for a private person to aspire to marry one of them would be considered a virtual advance of pretensions to the crown (see 1Kgs 2:17).

- 8] Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ishbosheth, and said, *Am* I a dog's head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to day with a fault concerning this woman?

It is not clear whether the accusation against Abner was well founded, but he resented the charge as an indignity, and, impelled by revenge, was determined to transfer all the weight of his influence to the opposite

party. He evidently set a full value on his services, and seems to have lorded it over his weak nephew in a haughty, overbearing manner.

- 9] So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him;
- 10] To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba.
- 11] And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him.
- 12] And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose *is* the land? saying *also*, Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand *shall be* with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.
- 13] And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face.

The demand for the restoration of his wife Michal seems perfectly fair; but David's insisting on it seems to have proceeded not so much from a lingering attachment as from an expectation that his possession of her would incline some adherents of the house of Saul to be favorable to his cause. (According to the law of Deut 24:1-4, David could not legitimately receive back his wife after her marriage to Paltiel. Jewish commentators explain that David had fled from Saul's home on the night of his marriage.)

- 14] And David sent messengers to Ishbosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver *me* my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines.
- 15] And Ishbosheth sent, and took her from *her* husband, *even* from Phaltiel the son of Laish.
- 16] And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.
- 17] And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past *to be* king over you:
- 18] Now then *do it*: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.

He spoke the truth in impressing their minds with the well-known fact of David's divine designation to the kingdom. But he acted a base and hypocritical part in pretending that his present movement was prompted by religious motives, when it sprang entirely from malice and revenge against Ish-bosheth.

- 19] And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin.

The particular appeal of the Benjamites was a necessary policy; their tribe enjoyed the honor of giving birth to the royal dynasty of Saul; they would naturally be disinclined to lose that *prestige*.

They were, besides, a determined people, whose contiguity to Judah might render them troublesome and dangerous and the enlistment of their interest would smooth the way for the adhesion of the other tribes. Abner exploited this opportunity of using his great influence in gaining over that tribe while escorting Michal to David with a suitable pomp and ceremony. This mission enabled him to cover his treacherous designs against his master—to draw the attention of the elders and people to David as uniting in himself the double recommendation of being the nominee of Jehovah, no less than a connection to the royal house of Saul, and, without suspicion of any dishonorable motives, to advocate policy of terminating the civil discord, by bestowing the sovereignty on the husband of Michal.

- 20] So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that *were* with him a feast.
- 21] And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

In the same character of public ambassador, he was received and feted by David; and while, ostensibly, the restoration of Michal was the sole object of his visit, he busily employed himself in making private overtures to David for bringing over to his cause those tribes which he had artfully seduced. Abner pursued a course unworthy of an honorable man and though his offer was accepted by David, the guilt and infamy of the transaction seem exclusively his.

- 22] And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from *pursuing* a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: but Abner *was* not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.
- 23] When Joab and all the host that *was* with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace.
- 24] Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why *is it that* thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone?

Joab's knowledge of Abner's wily character might have led him to doubt the sincerity of that person's proposals and to disapprove the policy of relying on his fidelity. But undoubtedly there were other reasons of a

private and personal nature which made Joab displeased and alarmed by the reception given to Abner:

- The military talents of that general,
- His popularity with the army,
- His influence throughout the nation,  
...all rendered him a formidable rival.

In the event of his overtures being carried out, the important service of bringing over all the other tribes to the king of Judah would establish so strong a claim on the gratitude of David, that his accession would inevitably raise a serious obstacle to the ambitions of Joab.

To these considerations was added the remembrance of the blood feud that existed between them since the death of his brother Asahel (2Sam 2:23).

Abner tried to make a peaceful agreement with David, but the "sons of Zeruah" plotted against him and killed him (vv. 26–30). While Joab did the actual killing, it is likely that his brother was in on the plans.

- 25] Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.
- 26] And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew *it* not.
- 27] And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth *rib*, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

Determined, therefore, to get Abner out of the way, Joab feigned some reason, probably in the king's name, for recalling him, and, going out to meet him, stabbed him unawares; [not within Hebron, for it was a city of refuge, but at a noted well in the neighborhood.]

Joab's hands continued to be stained with blood for he not only killed Abner, but also Absalom (2 Sam 18:14) and Amasa (2 Sam 20:10). How different history would have been had Abner lived, it is difficult to tell. Certainly Joab held unusual power over David, particularly after he assisted the king in his murderous plot against innocent Uriah (11:14ff). Note, however, David's godly conduct in the matter of Abner's death.

- 28] And afterward when David heard *it*, he said, I and my kingdom *are* guiltless before the LORD for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner:

- 29] Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.
- 30] So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.
- 31] And David said to Joab, and to all the people that *were* with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David *himself* followed the bier.

David's sorrow was sincere and profound, and he took occasion to give it public expression by the funeral honors he appointed for Abner.

“the bier”: a sort of wooden frame, partly resembling a coffin, and partly a hand-barrow.

- 32] And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.
- 33] And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?
- 34] Thy hands *were* not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, *so* fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.

This brief elegy is an effusion of indignation as much as of sorrow. As Abner had stabbed Asahel in open war [2Sam 2:23], Joab had not the right of the *Goel*.

[The second and third lines are connected with the last, describing the state in which he was when slain. In form, the subject in such propositions comes first, the verb generally becoming a participle. Indignation preponderates over sorrow: the point of the dirge is the mode of Abner's death.]

If Abner had been really slain in revenge for blood, as Joab asserted, he ought to have been delivered up “bound hand and foot.” But Joab, instead of waiting for his being delivered up with the legal formalities to the authorized penalty (if he were really guilty, which he was not), as an assassin, stabbed him as a worthless fellow (1 Kgs 2:5). David added that he felt himself, though a king, weakened by his loss, and that “a prince and great man had fallen.”

But David's feelings and conduct on hearing of the death, together with the whole character and accompaniments of the funeral solemnity, tended not only to remove all suspicion of guilt from him, but even to turn the tide of popular opinion in his favor, and to pave the way for his reigning over all the tribes more honorably than by the treacherous negotiations proposed by Abner.

- 35] And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down.
- 36] And all the people took notice *of it*, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.
- 37] For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.
- 38] And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?
- 39] And *I am* this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah *be* too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

David had organized six hundred malcontents, dealt harshly with the Amalekites (2 Sam 1), put to death the men who murdered Ishbosheth (2 Sam 4), but failed to act in the case of Joab's misdeeds. David washed his hands and left the family of Joab to the judgment of God. He will instruct to Solomon deal with Joab as some of the “loose ends” he will inherit (1 Kgs 2:5-6, 28-34).

## 2 Samuel 4

- 1] And when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled.
- 2] And Saul's son had two men *that were* captains of bands: the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin:
- 3] And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.)

The Beerothites (Gibeonites, Josh 9:17, 27) were expelled by Saul (II Sam 21:1, 2) and fled to Gittaim. Their town, Beeroth, passed into the possession of Benjamin. Beeroth is generally identified with el Bireh, a village nine miles from Jerusalem, on the road leading to the north.

- 4] And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son *that was* lame of *his* feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name *was* Mephibosheth.

He was thus considered unfit for exercising the duties of sovereignty. He was but five years old when his father and grandfather were killed. His nurse, hearing of the Philistines' victory, was apprehensive that, in pursuit of it, they would immediately send a party to Saul's house, to cut off all that pertained to it, and would especially aim at her young master,



who was now next heir to the crown. Under the apprehension of this, she fled with the child in her arms, to secure it either in some secret place where he could not be found, or in some strong place where he could not be got at; and, making haste she fell with the child, and by the fall some bone was broken or put out, and not well set, so that he was lame of it as long as he lived, and unfit either for court or camp.

- 5] And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, who lay on a bed at noon.

It is still a custom in the East to allow their soldiers a certain quantity of corn, together with some pay; and these two captains very naturally went to the palace the day before to fetch wheat, in order to distribute it to the soldiers, that it might be sent to the mill at the accustomed hour in the morning.

- 6] And they came thither into the midst of the house, *as though* they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth *rib*: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.

Their ruse to gain entrance to the house is an old one—the delivery man approach. The LXX has an altogether different rendering: *And, behold, the woman who kept the door of the house was winnowing wheat, and she slumbered and slept; and the brothers Rechab and Baanah escaped notice.* This also explains how it was that they were able to enter unnoticed.

- 7] For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bedchamber, and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night.

“...through the plain”; that is, the valley of the Jordan, through which their way lay from Mahanaim to Hebron.

- 8] And they brought the head of Ishbosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ishbosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

Such bloody trophies of rebels and conspirators have always been acceptable to princes in the East, and the carriers have been liberally rewarded. Ish-bosheth being a usurper, the two assassins thought they were doing a meritorious service to David by removing the only existing obstacle to the union of the two kingdoms.

- 9] And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, *As* the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,
- 10] When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who *thought* that I would have given him a reward for his tidings:
- 11] How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?
- 12] And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged *them* up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried *it* in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

Hands and feet as the instruments in perpetrating their crime. The exposure of the mutilated remains was intended as not only a punishment of their crime, but also the attestation of David’s abhorrence.

\* \* \*

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) List the sons of Saul.
- 2) List the wives and sons of David.
- 3) Summarize the factors that favored David’s rise in popularity.
- 4) Summarize the ambitions and strategy of Abner.

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) Was David’s handling of murderers too severe?
- 2) Explore the clues to David’s character which emerge in these chapters.
- 3) Summarize the relationship and political prospects impacting both Abner and Joab.

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Sketch a family tree of David, his wives, and sons.
- 2) Examine the differences in the genealogies in Matthew and Luke after David.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read Chapters 5 to 10, David's prosperity as the King of Israel.

### Notes:

- 1 *Antiquities*, 7:1, Section 3

## 2 Samuel Session 2 2 Samuel 5 - 7

### Review

Abner, Son of Ner, was the brother of Kish, the father of Saul (1 Chr 9:36). He was made commander in chief by his cousin Saul. He had introduced David to Saul after Goliath's death (1 Sam 14:51; 17:55,57). At Saul's death he upheld the dynasty in Ishbosheth's person, mainly owing to the paramount influence of the tribe Ephraim, which was jealous of Judah. While David reigned over Judah as God's anointed, at Hebron, Ishbosheth professedly, but Abner really, reigned in Mahanaim beyond Jordan. [In 2 Sam 2:10 Ishbosheth is said to have reigned for two years, but David for seven. Probably for the first five years after the fatal battle of Gilboa David alone reigned in the old capital of Judah, Hebron; but, the rest of the country was in the Philistines' hands. During these five years Israel gradually regained their country, and at length Abner proclaimed Ishbosheth at Mahanaim beyond Jordan, for security against the Philistines: 2 Sam 2:5-7 confirms this.

David's thanks to the men of Jabesh Gilead for the burial of Saul and his sons imply that no prince of Saul's line as yet had claimed the throne. His exhortation, "Be valiant," refers to the struggle with the Philistines, who alone stood in the way of his reign over all Israel. Ishbosheth's

known weakness, which accounts for his absence from the battle of Gilboa, suited well Abner's ambition.

At Gibeon Abner's army was beaten by Joab's; and in fleeing, Abner—having tried to deter Asahel, Joab's brother, from following him (since Abner shrank from a blood feud with Joab), but in vain—was at last constrained in self defense to slay him (2 Sam 2). Abner, presuming on his position as the only remaining stay of Ishbosheth, was tempted to take the late king Saul's concubine wife, Rizpah. This act, involving the suspicion of usurping the succession to the throne (so in the case of Absalom: 2 Sam 16:21; 20:3; 1 Kgs 2:13-25), called forth a rebuke from even so feeble a person as the nominal king, Ishbosheth.

Henceforth, in consequence of the rebuke, Abner set about bringing the northern ten tribes to David's sway. Received favorably and feasted by David, after his wife Michal was taken from Phaltiel and restored to him, Abner went forth from Hebron in peace.

But Joab, by a message, brought him back from the well of Sirah, and, taking him aside to speak peaceably, murdered him, Abishai also being an accomplice, for the blood of Asahel (Num 35:19; 2 Sam 3:30,39), and on Joab's part also, from fear of Abner's becoming a rival in the chief command (2 Sam 20:4-10).

David felt the sons of Zeruiah too strong for him to punish their crime; but, leaving their punishment to the Lord, he showed every honor to Abner's memory by following the bier, and composing a dirge. He would later instruct Solomon to deal with Joab.

**Ishbosheth:** Youngest of Saul's four sons, and his successor according to eastern usage, though Mephibosheth (whose name was similarly changed from Meribbaal), son of his oldest brother Jonathan, was alive.

At Mahanaim, the ancient sanctuary East of Jordan, beyond the reach of the Philistine conquerors, he was raised to the throne by Abner his valiant kinsman (2 Sam 2:8).

Ishbosheth was 35 at the battle of Gilboa and 40 when, by Abner's influence, after a five-years effort he ascended the throne "over all Israel" except Judah. His charge against Abner of connection with his father Saul's concubine Rizpah was tantamount to a charge of treasonously aspiring to the throne (2 Sam 3:7; compare 1 Kgs 2:13-22). Abner in a passion vowed to transfer the kingdom to David.

Ishbosheth did not dare to answer; and when David, sending the message to Ishbosheth direct, required him to restore his former wife Michal, Ishbosheth, constrained by Abner, forced his sister to leave her weeping husband Phaltiel and accompany Abner to David (2 Sam 3:13-16), for her restoration was demanded by David as the first preliminary in treating with Abner.

Abner's death deprived Ishbosheth of the last prop of his throne; "his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled" (2 Sam 4:1). Two sons of Rimmon of Beeroth, formerly a Canaanite city leagued with Gibeon (Josh 9:17), Baana and Rechab, captains of marauding "bands" which used to make raids on Judah (2 Sam 3:22; 4:2), took this opportunity of revenging Saul's slaughter of their kinsmen the Gibeonites (2 Sam 21) on Ishbosheth. Pretending to fetch wheat from the inner court for their men, in the still noon when Ishbosheth was taking his midday sleep on his bed, they smote and took away his head, making their escape all that night through the valley of the Jordan. Presenting it to David, as though it would be a welcome gift because Saul the father had been David's "enemy who sought his life," they with hypocritical profanation of God's name said: "Behold ... the Lord hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul and his seed."

But David reproached them with their wicked murder of "a righteous person in his own house upon his bed," and commanded his young men to slay them, and to hang up over the pool in Hebron their severed hands and feet. The head of Ishbosheth was duly buried in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

## 2 Samuel 5

- 1] Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we *are* thy bone and thy flesh.
- 2] Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that ledest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel.
- 3] So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel.

With Ishbosheth, Saul's son, now dead, the way was clear for David to assert his sovereignty over the Northern tribes of Israel as well as over Judah. There was a general recognition in the North that this should be done, so a delegation from all the tribes went to Hebron to encourage David's rule over them. They pointed out that

- 1) They were his kinsmen, his own flesh and blood, that is, all were descendants of Jacob.
- 2) They stated that he had distinguished himself as a hero of Israel. But furthermore,
- 3) They were conscious of the calling and anointing of the LORD in bringing David to power to shepherd them.

With no further hesitation they installed him as king over the entire nation. David reciprocated by entering into covenant with them.

Three anointings:

- 1<sup>st</sup>: Samuel's earlier (1 Sam. 16:13), demonstrated God's choice of David.
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: in Hebron over Judah (2 Sam. 2:4); and
- 3<sup>rd</sup>: This third oil-anointing was the people's confirmation and a public installation.

David's covenant probably involved an oath in which he pledged to follow the Mosaic requirements for kingship (Deut 17:14-20).

- 4] David *was* thirty years old when he began to reign, *and* he reigned forty years.
- 5] In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

David began his reign at age 30, the age at which priests began to serve (Num 4:3; 1 Chr 23:3). After seven and one-half years at Hebron, David decided to relocate the capital. His reason was almost certainly political for he decided on Jerusalem, a city on the border between Judah and the Northern tribes. [The distinction between Israel and Judah (2 Sam 11:11; 12:8; 19:42-43; 24:1, 9) suggests that 2 Samuel was written (or edited) after the nation was divided in 931 B.C. into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.]

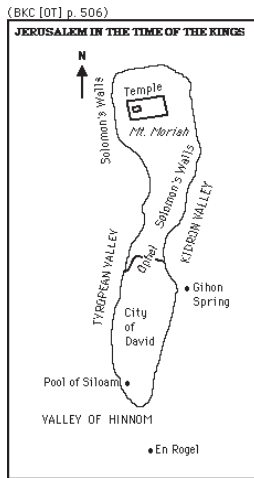
- 6] And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.

In Judges 19:10 and 1 Chr 11:4, 5, the city of Jerusalem was called *Jebus*. The Tel el Amarna letters (c. 1400 B.C.) refer to it as *Uru-salim* ("city of peace"). The inhabitants were of an Amorite-Hittite background (cf. Ezek 16:3, 45). For their defense they relied upon the unusual natural advantages of their citadel, which stood upon Mount Zion, a mount shut in by deep valleys on three sides.

Since Jerusalem had remained in Jebusite control ever since the days of Joshua (Josh 15:63) it was considered neutral, so David's residence there would demonstrate tribal impartiality. But the very fact that Jerusalem had remained Jebusite indicated its security and defensibility. This is seen in the taunting response of its citizens to David's siege of the city: "Even the blind and the lame can ward you off," they said.

7] Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same *is* the city of David.

Taking up a position on Mount Zion, the City of David lies just south of the Jebusite city.



The capture of Jerusalem marks a most important point in the history of Israel. Hitherto, the national life had had no real center. The residence of a judge, a prophet, or a king served as a temporary rallying place, such as the "palm tree of Deborah," Shiloh, Mizpeh, Gibeah (of Saul), Nob, or Hebron. From this time, the center was fixed, and, at least for the southern kingdom, all the other cities grew less and less important in comparison with the new capital.

8] And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, *that are* hated of David's soul, *he shall be chief and captain*. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

David promised his men that whoever could discover a means of access to the city would be promoted to commander-in-chief (1 Chr 11:6). The account in 1 Chronicles relates that Joab was able to do so, apparently by passing through the water tunnel which connected Jerusalem's water supply to its interior reservoirs (2 Sam 5:8). The Hebrew word for water

shaft may refer instead to a sort of grappling hook (cf. NIV marg.). In any case, the city was entered and incorporated into the capital.

"...the gutter": This is thought by some to mean a subterranean passage; by others a spout through which water was poured upon the fire which the besiegers often applied to the woodwork at the gateways, and by the projections of which a skillful climber might make his ascent good; a third class render the words, "whosoever dasheth them against the precipice" (1Chr11:6).

Archaeological discovery has provided an attractive identification of this gutter (RSV, *watershaft*) with the shaft that leads down through the rock on which the city is built to a pool fed by the Virgin Spring opposite the village of Siloam.

(So galling to David was the Jebusite sarcasm about "the blind and lame," that it became proverbial to speak of his enemies in general as the blind and lame.)

9] So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward.

After the city was captured, Mount Zion and Mount Ophel were consolidated into one entity described here and elsewhere as the City of David (5:7, 9; 6:12; 1 Kgs 2:10).

"...from Millo and inward...": Probably a row of stone bastions placed on the northern side of Mount Zion, and built by David to secure himself on that side from the Jebusites, who still lived in the lower part of the city. The house of Millo was perhaps the principal corner tower of that fortified wall.<sup>1</sup>

The word apparently means *filling* and may denote a mound or a rampart of earth, or a building constructed for the purpose of filling a large hole in the earth. This type of construction was found at several Hyksos centers, e.g., Avaris in Egypt and Hazor in Palestine.<sup>2</sup>

10] And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts *was* with him.

11] And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house.

"Tyre": One of the two great cities of the Phoenicians, famous for its commerce, craftsmen, and wealth. It was situated midway between Carmel and Beirut.

12] And David perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake. David's capture, expansion, and occupation of Jerusalem made it clear to all Israel and to surrounding peoples as well that God was with him and that he was not a renegade tribal chieftain but a political power with whom they must reckon. This is seen in the attention he received from Hiram, king of the Phoenician city-state of Tyre, who provided materials and men to build David a palace (cf. 1 Kings 5:1-11). Recognition by a person of such stature convinced David that God indeed had established him and exalted his kingdom.

13] And David took *him* more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.

In this conduct David transgressed an express law, which forbade the king of Israel to multiply wives unto himself (Deut 17:17). This eventually brought him untold sorrow.

14] And these *be* the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammua, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon,

15] Ibhar also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia,

16] And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet.

## David's Wives & Sons

### Wives:

Michal (Saul's daughter)  
 Ahinoam  
 Abigail (Nabal's widow)  
 Maacah (d. of King Geshur)  
 Haggith  
 Abital  
 Eglah  
 Bathsheba (wife of Uriah)

Plus other sons...

### Sons:

Ammon  
 Kileab  
 Absalom  
 Adonijah  
 Shephatiah  
 Ithream  
 Shammua  
 Shebab  
 Nathan  
 Solomon

17] But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard *of it*, and went down to the hold.

During the civil war between the house of Saul and David, those restless neighbors had remained quiet spectators of the contest. But now, jealous of David, they resolved to attack him before his government was fully established. The "hold" to which David went down was some fortified place where he might oppose the progress of the invaders, and where he signally defeated them.

18] The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

The Philistines who had gathered for battle in the Valley of Rephaim, that is, "of giants," a broad and fertile plain, which descends gradually from the central mountains towards the northwest only three or four miles southwest of Jerusalem; the route by which they marched against Jerusalem.

19] And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

20] And David came to Baal-Perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-Perazim.

"Baal-Perazim": that is, the plain of breaches, or "the Lord [here Israel's God] who breaks out."

21] And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.

Ironically the Philistines abandoned their idols to the Israelites as Israel, in Samuel's early days, had surrendered the ark of the covenant, the token of God's presence, to the Philistines (1 Sam 4:11).

22] And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

23] And when David enquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; *but* fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees.

"Mulberry trees": The LXX reads, *pear trees*. The Hebrew word מְבִבִּי *baka'* is the name given in Arabic to a shrub that grows at Mecca. It resembles the balsam, except that it has longer, larger leaves and its fruit is more nearly round. If a leaf is broken off from a twig, a white pungent sap, like a white tar, flows out. This feature, in all probability, gave rise to the name מְבִבִּי, "weeping."

24] And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.



This time the divine strategy was different. Israel circled behind the Philistines and when they heard a marching-like rustle in the balsam trees they attacked and drove the Philistines from Gibeon (cf. 1 Chr 14:16) to Gezer, a distance of 15 miles.

- 25] And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.

“Geba”: also called, “Gibeon.”

## 2 Samuel 6

- 1] Again, David gathered together all *the* chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.  
2] And David arose, and went with all the people that *were* with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth *between* the cherubims.

Now David had taken Jerusalem, a neutral place, and made it the political capital of the kingdom. All that remained was to retrieve the Ark of the Covenant, place it in the tabernacle he would erect on Mount Zion, and declare Jerusalem the religious center of the nation as well.

For 100 long years the ark had been separated from the tabernacle and other places of worship. After its capture by the Philistines at Aphek (1 Sam 4:11) it remained in Philistia for seven months, then briefly at Beth Shemesh, and the rest of the time at Kiriath Jearim (Baale: or, Baalah, is the same as Kiriath Jearim; Josh 15:9).

David first went with 30,000 men to Baalah of Judah to bring the ark from the house of Abinadab, its custodian. Described as that which bore the name of God Himself, the ark represented the presence of God who dwelled among His people in a special way (cf. Ex 25:22). As such, it was to be handled with reverence, even in its transportation from place to place. The Law specified that it be carried by Levites who would bear it on their shoulders by means of poles passed through gold rings attached to the ark (Ex 25:14; cf. Num 4:15, 20). Even the Levites could not touch the ark or even look in it because of its holiness.

- 3] And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that *was* in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

Why David overlooked the specified requirements is impossible to know, but he and Uzzah and Ahio, two descendants of Abinadab, placed the ark on a cart and proceeded, with great musical celebration, toward Jerusalem.

- 4] And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which *was* at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.  
5] And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of *instruments made of* fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

The use of musical instruments was common in Israel’s worship as may be seen, for example, in Psalm 150 where most of the same instruments are listed.

- 6] And when they came to Nachon’s threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth *his hand* to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook *it*.

Along the way they passed over a rough outcropping of stone, a threshing place belonging to Nacon (or Kidon; 1 Chr 13:9), and the oxen stumbled, threatening to throw the ark from the cart. Instinctively Uzzah, one of the attendants, laid hold of the ark to prevent its fall, an act of irreverence that cost him his life.

- 7] And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for *his* error; and there he died by the ark of God.

“...error”: or, “rashness.” The harshness of the LORD’s discipline must be seen in the light of His absolute holiness which requires that sacred tasks be done in a sacred manner (cf. comments on 1 Sam 6:19-7:2).

- 8] And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-Uzzah to this day.

Since God had “broken out” in wrath on Uzzah, David named that place Perez (“outbreak against”) Uzzah.

- 9] And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?  
10] So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obedom the Gittite.  
11] And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obed-Edom, and all his household.

David learned his lesson. He would not move the ark again until the Lord gave him instruction. It remained, therefore, in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite (a native of Gath) for three months.

- 12] And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and all that *pertaineth* unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom into the city of David with gladness.
- 13] And it was *so*, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.

At last the procession began again, this time according to divine requirement. As the ark was carried along, David offered sacrifice, dressed in priestly attire (a linen ephod), and dancing and shouting for joy with the Israelites.

- 14] And David danced before the LORD with all *his* might; and David *was* girded with a linen ephod.

Here trumpets were played (cf. other instruments in v. 5). David was not a descendant of Aaron, and could not therefore ordinarily qualify to be a priest. He was, however, the anointed of the Lord, the founder of that messianic line that would be fulfilled in the King who would also embrace the offices of priest and prophet (7:12-16; 1 Sam 2:35; Deut 18:15-19). (Some other Davidic kings functioned religiously as well, though not always properly (1 Kgs 3:4; 8:62-63; 2 Chr26:16-19).)

- 15] So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.
- 16] And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.
- 17] And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

“...pitched”: Heb. “stretched.”

- 18] And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts.
- 19] And he dealt among all the people, *even* among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece *of flesh*, and a flagon *of wine*. So all the people departed every one to his house.

The ark had been placed in a tabernacle which David had prepared (6:17). There the king continued his burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the LORD and climaxed the festivities with food gifts, a loaf of bread, a cake of dates, and a cake of raisins to each person in the assembled crowd.

- 20] Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

“...shamelessly”: or, “openly.”

- 21] And David said unto Michal, *It was* before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.
- 22] And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.

David defended his actions, affirming that he had done nothing wrong. Michal had impugned his holy zeal to be nothing but exhibitionism, a charge which hurt him deeply.

- 23] Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death. David apparently separated from her and she never had any children.

## 2 Samuel 7

- 1] And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies;
- 2] That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.

After David had become well settled in Jerusalem and was enjoying a period of peace, his thoughts turned to the idea of building a more permanent structure in which the Lord could reside among His people. The tent, he felt, was no longer suitable, especially in comparison with his own elaborate palace of cedar (cf. 5:11).

- 3] And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that *is* in thine heart; for the LORD *is* with thee.

Having communicated his desires to the Prophet Nathan, whose initial response was favorable, David would soon learn that his intentions were premature.

- 4] And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying,
- 5] Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?
- 6] Whereas I have not dwelt in *any* house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.
- 7] In all *the places* wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?

“...any of...”: “Any of the judges.”

- 8] Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheeppcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:
- 9] And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great *men* that *are* in the earth.
- 10] Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime,

The promise that the people of the Lord, David’s kingdom Israel, would have an enduring land of their own was also based on earlier commitments of the Lord. The seed of Abraham, God said, would be given Canaan as a home forever (Gen 13:15; 15:18; 17:8; Deut 34:4).

[This real estate does *not* belong to the PLO, the UN, or anyone other than “the people of the Lord,” (even the *Quran* calls them the people of the book!); “David’s kingdom Israel.”]

- 11] And as since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house.

Since the Exodus the LORD had resided among the people in a temporary structure. There was no need now for anything different. In fact it was not God’s will for David to build Him a house; instead God would build a house for David!

God had called David from inauspicious beginnings to be a shepherd of God’s people (v. 8). Likewise, God had gathered Israel to Himself and would plant them securely in their own land. The house to be built for David would be a royal house, a dynasty of kings. It would originate with

him but *would never end* (v. 16). The kingdom and its throne would be permanent, a realm over which the Son of David would reign forever (cf. 23:5).

- 12] And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.
- 13] He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

This throne was to be ultimately established with Mary’s son on it:

*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto **him the throne of his father David**. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

Luke 1:31-33

- 14] I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:
- 15] But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I put away before thee.
- 16] And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.
- 17] According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

The promise that David and his seed would be kings fulfilled the even more ancient Abrahamic Covenant blessing that the patriarchs would be the fathers of kings (Gen 17:6, 16; 35:11). To Judah, great-grandson of Abraham, was given the explicit pledge that a promised ruler would come from Judah (Gen 49:10). Samuel anointed this one from Judah, David himself, of whom the Lord said, “He is the one” (1 Sam 16:12).

David was aware of his election by God and of the theological significance of that election as part of the messianic line that would result in a divine Descendant and King (Ps 2:6-7; 110; cf. Ethan’s words in Ps. 89:3-4). The prophets also attested to the Davidic Messiah, the One who would rule over all and forever on His throne (Isa 9:1-7; 11:1-5; Jer 30:4-11; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Amos 9:11-15).

As for a temple, David would not be allowed to build it, but his son after him would have the honor of doing so (2 Sam 7:12-13). That this refers to a literal house and not a dynasty is clear from the context, which speaks

of the results that would follow if the son would be disobedient to the Lord (vv. 14-15). This could not be true of the King who is spoken of as the climactic figure of the Davidic dynastic line.

These verses, then, are a good example of an Old Testament passage in which some elements find fulfillment in the immediate future (Solomon and other strictly human descendants of David), while other elements will be realized only in the more distant future (Jesus Christ, the Son of David; cf. Luke 1:31-33, et al.).

- 18] Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who *am* I, O Lord GOD? and what *is* my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?
- 19] And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And *is* this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?
- “...manner”: Heb. “law.”
- 20] And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy servant.
- 21] For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know *them*.
- 22] Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for *there is* none like thee, neither *is there any* God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.
- 23] And what one nation in the earth *is* like thy people, *even* like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, *from* the nations and their gods?
- 24] For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel *to be* a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God.
- 25] And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish *it* for ever, and do as thou hast said.
- 26] And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts *is* the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee.
- 27] For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.

“...revealed”: Heb. “opened the *ear*.”

“..let it...”: Heb. “be thou pleased and bless.”

David's response to this magnificent revelation concerning the nature of his kingship was to acknowledge the Lord's goodness in bestowing it (vv. 18-21) and to extol God's incomparable sovereignty (How great You are. . . ! There is no one like You, v. 22). This, David said, was seen

especially in God's selection of Israel and His redemptive grace on her behalf (vv. 23-24). Finally he prayed that the promise God had made might indeed find fulfillment to the glory of His own holy name—so that His name would be great forever (vv. 25-29). Interestingly David addressed God seven times as O Sovereign LORD (NIV), vv. 18-20, 22, 28-29), words that translate the Hebrew אֲדֹנָי 'Adonay (lit., “Lord”) יהוה / *Yehoveh*. David expressed his humility before God by referring to himself as “Your servant” 10 times (vv. 19-21, 25-29).

\* \* \*

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) Trace the Messianic promises from Gen 3:15 to the anointing of David.
- 2) Summarize the achievements of David to this time (chapter 7).
- 3) In what ways was the kingdom of David *prophetic* of that of Jesus Christ?

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) Was Ussah's death necessary? Why?
- 2) What is the significance of the Davidic Covenant to us *today*?
- 3) What is the significance of Luke 1:32?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Construct a comprehensive family tree of David.
- 2) Make a list of the chain of prophecies relating to the Messianic (Davidic) Reign culminating in Revelation 19.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read 2 Samuel 5-10; 1 Chronicles 11-19.

## Notes:

1. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*, On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary, 2 Sam 5:9-11 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).
2. Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*, 2 Sam 5:8 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962).

## 2 Samuel Session 3 2 Samuel 8 - 10 David's Triumphs

### Review

With the death of Saul, David's fortune changed. He was no longer a fugitive, and was quickly acknowledged as king by the southern tribe of Judah, his own tribe. In the north, Ishbosheth, a surviving son of Saul, was propped up as king by the military leader, Abner.

Over the next years there were minor skirmishes between the two kingdoms. But David's strength showed itself, as did Ishbosheth's weakness. Then Ishbosheth was assassinated (and the assassins executed by an outraged David). It was seven and a half years after David had become king of Judah that he was recognized as king by all of Israel. The story of David's triumphs is told in 2 Samuel 5-10 and in 1 Chronicles 11-19. From these books we glean something of the significance of the accomplishments of this great leader, as well as great man of faith.

David's accomplishments as Israel's ruler are unmatched. David's rule was strong and aggressive and his accomplishments were unparalleled. Other men of history have demonstrated military and administrative capacity, but David overshadows them all by the breadth and depth of his ability.

To cap it all, David is one of the great men of faith. He is a type of Jesus, who will rule as God's coming King. His personal qualities and faith provide examples for believers of every age.

## Events of David's Reign

David made king	2 Sam 5:1-5; 1 Chr 11:1-3
David takes Jerusalem	2 Sam 5:6-9; 1 Chr 11:4-9
David organizes the mighty men	1 Chr 11:10-12:40
David defeats the Philistines	2 Sam 5:17-25; 1 Chr 14:8-17
David brings the ark to Jerusalem	2 Sam 6:1-12; 1 Chr 13:1-14; 15:1-15
David offers praise	2 Sam 6:12-23; 1 Chr 15:6-16:36
David receives a covenant promise	2 Sam 7:1-16; 1 Chr 17:1-15
David wins more victories	2 Sam 8:1-14; 1 Chr 18:1-13
David organizes his government	2 Sam 8:15-18; 1 Chr 18:14-17
David honors Mephibosheth	2 Sam 9:1-13
David defeats the Ammonites	2 Sam 10:1-19; 1 Chr 19:1-19

## 2 Samuel 8

- 1] And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Metheg-Ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.

“Metheg-Ammah”: or, “the bridle of Ammah.”

God had promised as part of His covenant with David that He would give Israel rest from all her enemies (7:11). He now began to do that very thing. First, the Philistines, Israel's perennial enemies for more than 125 years, were attacked and defeated at Metheg Ammah, a town otherwise unknown.

- 2] And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And *so* the Moabites became David's servants, *and* brought gifts.

Next, David attacked the Moabites, putting two out of every three prisoners to death. The survivors he put in bondage to Israel, which implies that Moab became a vassal state to David as the great king. (The reason for this harsh treatment is a bit baffling since David had ancestral roots in Moab—through Ruth—and relationships up until then appear to have been amicable (1 Sam 22:3-4).

- 3] David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates.



The Arameans then became David's objective. Consisting of a loose federation of city-states, the Arameans rose to prominence the same time Israel's monarchy rose under Saul and David. David first made an assault against Hadadezer (or Hadarezer), king of Zobah, an area just north of Damascus. Hadadezer had gone on a campaign to the Euphrates River to recover some territory, and in his absence David struck.

- 4] And David took from him a thousand *chariots*, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot *horses*, but reserved of them *for* an hundred chariots.

His victory over these Arameans gained him prisoners (7,000 charioteers and 20,000 foot soldiers), 1,000 chariots, and 100 of the chariot horses, the latter used for the first time to field a chariot corps in Israel. (Though the Heb. in v. 4 reads "1,700 charioteers," 1 Chr 18:4, probably a better-preserved text, reads, as the NIV has it, "1,000 of his chariots [and] 7,000 charioteers.")

- 5] And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men.

Before David could return, he and his men were attacked by the Aramean troops of Damascus. Again David prevailed, and after slaying 22,000 of the enemy.

- 6] Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, *and* brought gifts. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

David established an occupation force in Damascus, thus making Damascus another client state to Israel, required to pay tribute.

- 7] And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.  
8] And from Bethah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

Finally he returned to Jerusalem triumphantly, bringing gold shields and much bronze as trophies of conquest.

- 9] When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer,  
10] Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And *Joram* brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass:

Having witnessed David's remarkable military successes, Tou (Heb. Toi) king of the Aramean city-state of Hamath, decided to capitulate without struggle and become a vassal of Israel. To symbolize this move he sent his son Joram (or Hadoram, 1 Chr 18:10) to David laden with precious articles of silver and gold and bronze.

- 11] Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued;  
12] Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

These David added to all the other spoils he had gained in previous campaigns:

Edom (cf. v. 14);  
Moab (cf. v. 2);  
Ammonites (cf. chap. 10);  
Philistines (cf. 8:1); and  
Amalek. (David's conquest of Amalek is not narrated in the OT).

All these spoils he dedicated to the service of the LORD (cf. 1 Kings 7:51).

- 13] And David gat *him* a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, *being* eighteen thousand *men*.  
14] And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

Finally David gained far-flung fame by defeating an Aramean army of 18,000 in the Valley of Salt, a marshy plain south of the Dead Sea. [Though "Aram" (i.e., "Arameans") is in most Hebrew manuscripts, the Septuagint and some other versions have "Edom," a reading that is also supported by a few Hebrew manuscripts and by 1 Chronicles 18:12. The difference in the original language is in only one letter: d (as in Edom) and r (as in Aram), easily confused in Hebrew. If "Aramean," it may be that the Edomites had solicited Aramean help against Israel.]

In any event, David again prevailed and brought Edom also under his hegemony. The LORD gave David victory everywhere he went.

- 15] And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people.

## David's Administration

16] And Joab the son of Zeruiah *was over* the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder;

“...recorder”: or, “writer of chronicles.”

17] And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, *were* the priests; and Seraiah *was* the scribe;

“...scribe”: or, “secretary.”

18] And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was over* both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers.

David's “cabinet” included:

- Joab as military commander;
- Jehoshaphat, record keeper;
- Zadok and Ahimelech chief priests;
- Seraiah . . . secretary;
- Benaiah (cf. 23:2-23), leader of the elite Kerethite and Pelethite troops (also mentioned in 1 Sam 30:14; 2 Sam 15:18; 20:7, 23; 1 Kgs 1:38, 44; 1 Chr 18:17; Ezek 25:16; Zeph 2:5, and possibly related to the Philistines in some way); and
- David's own sons were royal *advisers*. [This Hebrew word, usually rendered “priests,” is explained in 1 Chronicles 18:17 as “chief officials” (cf. 2 Sam 20:26). This no doubt is the better meaning since David's sons, as Judeans, were ineligible to serve as priests.]

The mention of Zadok and Ahimelech together (8:17) indicates the transition that was occurring in the office of priest. Ahimelech, son of Abiathar, was a descendant of Eli, whose priestly line Samuel had said would come to an end (1 Sam 3:10-14). Zadok was a descendant of Aaron through Eleazar (1 Chr 6:4-8). Through Zadok the line of priests eventually continued through the remainder of Old Testament times.

## 2 Samuel 9

This chapter introduces what is sometimes called the “Succession Narrative,” a literary piece which includes chapters 9-20. Its purpose is to show the steps David undertook to succeed Saul and to establish the permanence of his own dynasty.

David's first step was to solicit the support of the Northern tribes by extending favor to the surviving members of Saul's household.

- 1] And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?
- 2] And *there was* of the house of Saul a servant whose name *was* Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, *Art* thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant *is he*.
- 3] And the king said, *Is* there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, *which is* lame on *his* feet.

David had pledged to Jonathan that he would never forget the covenant of friendship that had bound them together (1 Sam 20:14-17). He therefore called Ziba, a servant of Saul, and asked him if some member of Saul's family had special need (cf. 1 Sam 20:42).

- 4] And the king said unto him, Where *is* he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he *is* in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar.

Ziba replied that Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan (2 Sam 4:4), was still alive and living at Lo Debar (just east of the Jordan, five miles south of the Wadi Yarmuk; cf. 17:27).

- 5] Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar.

David immediately sent for him, restored Saul's personal estate to him, and supported him on a royal pension (v.7).

- 6] Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

“Mephibosheth”: also called “Meribbaal.”

- 7] And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

In all this David showed kindness (*hesed*, “loyal love”) for Jonathan's sake (cf. v. 1).

- 8] And he bowed himself, and said, What *is* thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I *am*?

In humility Mephibosheth referred to himself as David's servant (v. 6) and as a dead dog (v. 8), that is, worthless (cf. 16:9).

- 9] Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house.
- 10] Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in *the fruits*, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

David instructed Ziba and his 15 sons and 20 servants to farm Mephibosheth's land and to treat him as David's own son. David's provision for Mephibosheth and his letting him eat at the king's table (vv. 7, 10-11, 13) again demonstrated David's magnanimous heart.

- 11] Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, *said the king*, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.
- 12] And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name *was* Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba *were* servants unto Mephibosheth.
- 13] So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

## 2 Samuel 10

Another aspect of David's succession was his international relationships. David had brought many of the surrounding nations under tribute to Israel (8:12). Included in these nations was Ammon, a kingdom directly east of the Jordan River. Since Saul's early years Ammon had been ruled by Nahash. In fact it was he who had attacked Jabesh Gilead in the beginning of Saul's tenure and was defeated by Saul (1 Sam 1:1-11).

- 1] And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead.
- 2] Then said David, I will shew kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father shewed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon.

At last Nahash died and was succeeded by his son Hanun. Because Nahash had shown David some unspecified kindness, David sent an envoy to Ammon to express his sympathy to Hanun regarding his father. This, David no doubt hoped, would enable him to have a friendly ally on his eastern flank.

- 3] And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David *rather* sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?

“Thinkest...”: Heb. “In thy eyes doth David.”

But Hanun's advisers, perhaps recalling Saul's victory over Ammon 50 years before, counseled Hanun not to accept David's overtures but rather to view the Israelites as espionage agents.

- 4] Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, *even* to their buttocks, and sent them away.

David's messengers were not only turned back but their beards were half shaved off and their garments cut away to an immodest length which, to those sensitive Semites, was an unbearable ignominy (cf. Isa 15:2; 20:4).

- 5] When they told *it* unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and *then* return.
- 6] And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Bethrehab, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ishtob twelve thousand men.

“Ishtob”: or, “the men of Tob.”

Recognizing that his insult to David was, in effect, a declaration of war, Hanun engaged 33,000 mercenary troops from the three Aramean kingdoms of Beth Rehob (in northern Galilee), Zobah (an area just north of Damascus), and Maacah (east of upper Galilee), and from Tob, a small kingdom on the western fringes of the Syro-Arabian desert.

- 7] And when David heard of *it*, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men.
- 8] And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ishtob, and Maacah, *were* by themselves in the field.
- 9] When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice *men* of Israel, and put *them* in array against the Syrians:
- 10] And the rest of the people he delivered into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put *them* in array against the children of Ammon.

David sent his forces, led by Joab and Abishai, to encounter Hanun's own army and his mercenaries at Medeba (1 Chr 19:7), 12 miles due east of the northern end of the Dead Sea.

- 11] And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee.

Joab directed his attention to the Aramean divisions and Abishai's troops to the Ammonites, with the understanding that one would help the other as circumstances required. The result was a smashing victory for Israel.

- 12] Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.  
13] And Joab drew nigh, and the people that *were* with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him.  
14] And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city. So Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.  
15] And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together.

Though the Ammonites apparently learned their lesson, the Arameans determined to avenge the disaster of Medeba by recalling their occupation forces from beyond the Euphrates River and employing them against Israel.

- 16] And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that *were* beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer *went* before them.

"...the river": that is, "Euphrates."  
"Shobach": or, "Shophach."

Under the command of Shobach, general of the army of Hadadezer of Zobah, they took up positions at Helam, a desert place 40 miles straight east of the Sea of Kinnereth.

- 17] And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him.  
18] And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew *the men of* seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there.

"...horsemen": also called, "footmen."

There David met them, and again the Lord gave Israel victory. David's men killed 700 charioteers and 40,000 foot soldiers and struck down Shobach. (Though the Heb. has 700 charioteers, the parallel passage in 1 Chr 19:18 indicates that 7,000 charioteers were slain. The larger number is preferable since the Chronicles account on the whole seems fuller and more comprehensive.)

- 19] And when all the kings *that were* servants to Hadarezer saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

This broke the back of Aramean resistance and brought the Aramean confederates under Israel's domination. Never again did they side with Ammon against the people of Israel. This is the second account of a subjugation of Hadadezer by David (cf. 2 Sam 8:3-8). Apparently chapter 8 records an initial reduction of the Arameans of Zobah to Israelite vassalhood, while chapter 10 assumes an Aramean rebellion against David's overlordship, a rebellion which was squashed and which resulted in continued Aramean submission.

## Prophetic Aspects

The kingdom of Jesus, David's greater Son:

Jer 23:5-6	Jer 33:22, 25-26
Jer 30:8-9	Jer 33:14-17, 20-21
Ezek 37:24-25	Dan 7:13-14
Hosea 3:4-5	Amos 9:11
Zech 14:3-9	Luke 1:32

Cf. Psalm 2, 89.

Next Session: David's sin with Bathsheba.

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## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) List the principal members and roles of David's cabinet officers.
- 2) Sketch a map with the extent of David's kingdom and vassals.

- 3) List some of the prophetic aspects of David's reign and administration.

## Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) Why did David show kindness to Mephibosheth? What were the political implications?
- 2) How is the kingdom of David's Greater Son foreshadowed in David's reign and administration?
- 3) Who are the 24 Elders in the Book of Revelation?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Trace the Messianic (Davidic) Reign through the Old Testament, and its confirmations in the New Testament.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read 2 Samuel 11 & 12. Psalm 51.

# 2 Samuel Session 4 2 Samuel 11 - 12 David and Bathsheba

## Introduction

Often it's crushing for us to discover that a person we admire has faults.

- An idealized parent disappoints.
- A friend we respect falls short.
- A political leader we support suffers his own particular Watergate.

Discouraged and hurt, we feel a bitterness that is hard to overcome. When we look in the Biblical record at David, certainly one of history's exceptional men and one whose faith is mentioned in both Testaments,

we discover that he too had "feet of clay." The saint is revealed as a sinner. And we wonder, "Why does God hold up as examples men and women who have such obvious flaws?"

For one thing, through David we are reminded that God is a realist. His Book contains no "let's-pretend" whitewash of believers. Noting this, we may be helped to appreciate the fact that *we can come to this God in spite of our own weaknesses*. God won't overlook them. But He won't be surprised by our failures either. God knows that "we are dust" (Ps 103:14).

For another thing, a revelation of saints' failures as well as successes helps us to identify with them. If a David or an Abraham were represented as spiritually perfect, you and I would hardly feel close or similar to him. The truths that God is teaching us through their lives might be seen but might not be thought of as relevant. After all, we might think, "That's all right for a spiritual giant like David! But what about poor, struggling me?" Then we discover that David struggled too. And sometimes he lost out to his weaknesses. David did know sin's pull, just as we do. His experiences *are* relevant to us!

The New Testament affirms, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man" (1 Cor 10:13). We are all bound up together in the shared ties of humanity. David knew the feelings and temptations that you know—and you know his! When the Bible accurately reports the failures and follies of God's saints, it demonstrates this common bond and encourages us to identify our own inner struggles with theirs.

In this light, let's review this most famous of stumblings:

## 2 Samuel 11

- 1] And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth *to battle*, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

The return of spring was the usual time of commencing military operations. This expedition took place the year following the war against the Syrians; and it was entered upon because the disaster of the former campaign having fallen chiefly upon the Syrian mercenaries, the Ammonites had not been punished for their insult to the ambassadors.



David ordered Joab to launch an invasion of Rabbah, the capital of Ammon. Rabbah is modern Amman (Philadelphia in Hellenistic times), about twenty miles east of the Jordan at the head of the Wadi Amman.

Though kings usually led their armies personally, David, for reasons not related, remained in Jerusalem. This is also suggestive in evaluating the subsequent events.

- 2] And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman *was* very beautiful to look upon.
- 3] And David sent and enquired after the woman. And *one* said, *Is* not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

Bathsheba was not without blame. She came at his request, seemingly without hesitation, and offered no resistance to his desires (at least as far the record is concerned). The fact that she was bathing in the uncovered court of a house in the heart of a city, into which anyone could look down from the roofs of neighboring houses or from higher ground, does not say much for her modesty, even if she had no ulterior motive, as some commentators suggest. [She may not have been a stranger: Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam, one of David's officers. Uriah, being a brother officer, formed an intimacy which ended in his marrying Eliam's daughter. Eliam was the son of Ahithophel, David's (and later, Absalom's), counsel.]

David's submission to Bathsheba's charms is inexcusable, for the deliberate steps he followed to bring her to the palace required more than enough time for him to resist the initial, impulsive temptation (cf. James 1:14-15), and from the enormity of his transgression against the Lord's statutes and against one of his top fighting men.

- 4] And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

But David probably had to make a promise, or an express stipulation, to Bathsheba, before she complied with the royal will (1Kgs 1:13, 15, 17, 28); for in addition to her transcendent beauty, she appears to have been a woman of superior talents and address:

- in obtaining the object of her ambition;
- in her securing that her son should succeed on the throne;

- in her promptitude to give notice of her pregnancy;
- in her activity in defeating Adonijah's natural expectation of succeeding to the crown;
- in her dignity as the king's mother—

...in all this we see very strong indications of the ascendancy she gained and maintained over David.

He, perhaps, had ample leisure and opportunity to discover the punishment of this unhappy connection in more ways than one! [Often, the punishment in adultery is the giving of each of them to each other...]

- 5] And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, *I am* with child.

Having discovered her identity, he sent for her at once and, assured of her ritual purity (cf. Lev 12:2-5; 15:19-28), had intercourse with her. The bathing itself may have been for the purpose of ritual purification and would therefore not only advertise Bathsheba's charms but would serve as a notice to the king that she was available to him.

In due time she found that she was pregnant by the king and, undoubtedly in great distress, informed him of her condition. Some immediate measures of concealing their sin were necessary, as well for the king's honor as for her safety, for death was the punishment of an adulteress (Lev20:10).

- 6] And David sent to Joab, *saying*, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

(Though the Hittite Empire had ended by 1200 B.C., pockets of ethnic Hittites continued to exist in Syria and even Israel. Uriah was from one of these.)

- 7] And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded *of him* how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.
- 8] And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess *of meat* from the king.
- 9] But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.

This sudden recall, the manner of the king, his frivolous questions (v.7), and his urgency for Uriah to sleep in his own house, may have awakened suspicions of the cause of this procedure!

- 10] And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from *thy* journey? why *then* didst thou not go down unto thine house?
- 11] And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? *as* thou livest, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.
- 12] And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow.
- 13] And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

The crisis brought by the pregnancy required some kind of suitable resolution, so David determined to “legitimize” the impending birth by bringing Uriah back from the Ammonite campaign, thus making it possible for him to enjoy the intimacies of marriage. But the subterfuge did not work, for though David resorted to two schemes (vv. 8, 13) to induce Uriah to go home and be with his wife, the noble Hittite refused. Why should he, he argued, be allowed the comforts of home and a conjugal visit while his friends in combat were deprived of them? Even after David plied him with wine, Uriah’s sense of loyalty to his comrades prevailed over his desire for his wife.

- 14] And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah.
- 15] And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

In utter frustration David wrote a memo to Joab commanding that Uriah, when he returned to the front line, be abandoned to the enemy by an unexpected Israelite withdrawal. Ironically, Uriah was the bearer of his own tidings of doom.

- 16] And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men *were*.

Joab served his lord faithfully in this matter, with a view to having his own interests served at another time.

- 17] And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell *some* of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

This plan succeeded: Uriah was surrounded and slain.

- 18] Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;
- 19] And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,
- 20] And if so be that the king’s wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?
- 21] Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

“Jerubbesheth”: also called, “Jerubbaal.”

Ordinarily David would have been upset by the news of casualties. He would have wondered at Israel’s indiscretion in fighting under Rabbah’s wall, a blunder which had cost Abimelech, son of Gideon, his life long ago (Judg 9:50-54). So Joab instructed the courier who bore the news to inform the king specifically that Uriah also had died. This he knew would mollify David’s anguish.

- 22] So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for.
- 23] And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate.
- 24] And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and *some* of the king’s servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.
- 25] Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him.
- 26] And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.
- 27] And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

David’s response to the news was predictable. He told the messenger to tell Joab that in circumstances such as war, life and death were matters of blind chance. His instruction back to Joab was only that the siege of Rabbah be even more aggressive.

Bathsheba soon learned of her husband’s tragic death. After the customary time of mourning, she moved into the king’s palace in time to bear their son. The LORD was displeased, however, and set events in motion that would trouble David till his death.

Four sons sprang from this marriage (2 Sam 5:14; 1 Ch 3:5): Solomon, whose mind she helped much to mold; also of Shimea (or Shammua), Shobab, and Nathan (1 Chr 3:5). Nathan and Solomon were both ancestors of the Lord Jesus (Lk 3:31; Mt. 1:6).

Her strength of intellect, kindness and influence over David and her son, appear in 1 Kgs 1:11-31; 2:13-21. She is said by tradition to have composed Prov 31 as an admonition to Solomon on his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter. With the help of the prophet Nathan she will render futile the usurpation of Adonijah and craftily secure the throne for her son Solomon (1 Kgs 1:11 ff). Later Adonijah succeeds in deceiving Bathsheba, but his plan is frustrated by the king (1 Kgs 2:13 ff). In the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:6) Bathsheba is mentioned as the former wife of Uriah and the mother of Solomon by David.

## Ahitophel

But there's more: Ahitophel was David's counselor (to whose treachery he touchingly alludes Ps 41:9; 55:12-14, 20, 21). Ahithophel was the father of Eliam (or by transposition Ammiel, 1 Chr 3:5), the father of Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:3; 23:34,39), and the father-in-law of Uriah. Uriah the Hittite and Eliam, being both of the king's guard (consisting of 37 officers), were intimate, and Uriah married the daughter of his brother officer. Ahithophel was the mainspring of Absalom's rebellion and he calculated on his adhesion from the first (2 Sam 15:12).

*How natural Ahithophel's sense of wrong toward David, the murderer of his grandson by marriage and the corrupter of his granddaughter!*

## 2 Samuel 12

1] And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

Sometime after the birth of Bathsheba's son, Nathan the prophet told David a story of a rich man who, in spite of having everything, stole a poor neighbor's only ewe (i.e., female) lamb to provide a feast for a guest.

- 2] The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks and herds:  
 3] But the poor *man* had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

“...meat”: Heb. “morsel.”

- 4] And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.  
 5] And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, *As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:*  
 6] And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

Enraged, David pronounced that the man who would do such a despicable thing ought to die. Though the Law contained no such penalty for the theft of property, kidnapping was a capital offense and it may be that David viewed the taking of a pet lamb in this light (Ex 21:16). In addition, he said, the rich man must restore four lambs for the one stolen for not even the rich man's death could compensate the poor man's property loss (Ex 22:1).

7] And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

“Thou art the man!” Can you imagine the effect of this dramatic accusation!

8] And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

The LORD, he said, had given David everything, but he had taken, as it were, the pet lamb of a poor neighbor (v. 9).

- 9] Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.  
 10] Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.  
 11] Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.  
 12] For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

David now would suffer the sword as had Uriah and David's wives would be taken from him as Bathsheba had been stolen from the Hittite. This

was fulfilled by Absalom (David's own son!) when he lay with David's concubines (16:22).

But David's shame would be even greater because, in contrast with David's sin in secret, all these things would happen in the glare of the public eye, in broad daylight. David had violated the sanctity of the home; his own home now would produce evil. This judgment needs to be seen as a natural consequence of David's act; his own disrespect for the divinely ordained family pattern would bear its own bitter fruit.

- 13] And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

David's immediate reaction is revealing. Unlike others who struck out in anger against such prophets and condemned them, David immediately confessed his sin and admitted the rightness of God's judgment: "I have sinned against the Lord."

Sin has two results—it separates a man from God, and it produces evil effects in the world. The first of these can be canceled by forgiveness, but the second remains. The tragedy of human history is that the evil effects of sin are not always nor wholly borne by the sinner.

- 14] Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die.

One may wonder, perhaps, why David was not punished with death as he had so sternly advocated for the guilty man. Adultery and murder both were sufficient cause for the execution of even a king (Ex 21:12; Lev 20:10).

The answer surely lies in the genuine and contrite repentance which David expressed, not only in the presence of Nathan but more fully in Psalm 51 (and others: Ps 32:1–11; 103:1–22).

David's sin was heinous, but the grace of God was more than sufficient to forgive and restore him, as Nathan could testify. And yet, though David could be restored to fellowship with his God, the impact of his sin remained and would continue to work its sorrow in the nation as well as in the king's life.

David's confession brought him forgiveness, but it could not change the course of events his choices had set in motion. David would not die,

but the child Bathsheba had conceived would die. One day David would go to be with the son whom the Lord had taken, but that son would never know David on earth. David would lose the successive deaths of four sons, besides a lengthened train of other evils. Cf. v.6.

- 15] And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

Shortly after the interview with Nathan the child became terminally ill. Despite David's intense fasting and prayer the baby died within a week.

- 16] David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.  
17] And the elders of his house arose, *and went* to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.  
18] And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?  
19] But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.  
20] Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed *himself*, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.

Only then did David cease his mourning, wash, worship, and eat, contrary to custom and much to the amazement of his servants.

- 21] Then said his servants unto him, What thing *is* this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, *while it was* alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.  
22] And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?  
23] But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

David's response is classic: While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. . . . But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? David attested to the irrevocability of death—its finality renders further petition absurd.

"I will go to him, David said, but he will not return to me." This is one of the reasons that many believe that a child, before the "age of

accountability,” is saved. This would seem to be what Paul is also saying in Romans 7:9.

- 24] And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him.
- 25] And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

Eventually another son was born to David and Bathsheba, one who bore a double name: Called Solomon (“peace”) by them; yet the LORD, through Nathan, also named him Jedidiah (“beloved of the LORD”). Some think that Nathan served as the royal tutor of Solomon.

- 26] And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city.
- 27] And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters.

In the meantime, the Ammonite war went well for Joab. He had all but captured the Ammonite capital, Rabbah, having taken the royal citadel and the city’s water supply: “city of waters” = “Waterfort”—the work defending the water supply of the royal city. (Polybius, in his account of the siege of Rabbath-Ammon by Antiochus Epiphanes centuries later, says the Syrian king succeeded in stopping the water supply and forced the garrison to surrender the city proper, which was built on the high ground above.)

- 28] Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.

In order that David might gain the credit for its fall, Joab urged the king to lead the final assault himself. This David did.

- 29] And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.
- 30] And he took their king’s crown from off his head, the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was set on David’s head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance.

He sacked the city of its wealth, including the 75-pound (a talent) golden crown of the Ammonite king (*malkam*, which could also be a reference to “Molech,” the Ammonite god).

- 31] And he brought forth the people that *were* therein, and put *them* under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brickkiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

David also put the survivors to slave labor (using saws, iron picks, and axes and working at brickmaking) and returned in triumph to Jerusalem.

## Conclusion

When Old Testament saints are shown to be sinners, Scripture is expressing something basic about the Gospel. The good news of God’s love for man is not, “Trust Me, and be freed of your humanity.” The good news of God’s love is that the Lord has committed Himself to deal with sin and to make us progressively more and more like Him. For progressive growth we always stand in need of God’s grace and aid. God deals with sin by the means of forgiveness. The greatness of David is not in his perfection but in his willingness to face his sin and to return wholeheartedly to God.

How different from Saul! When Saul sinned, he begged Samuel to stay with him, that the people might not discover God’s anger. When the Prophet Nathan confronted David concerning his sin with Bathsheba, David not only confessed immediately, but he even wrote a psalm used later in public worship, openly admitting his fault and sharing the inner anguish that accompanied loss of fellowship with God!

This is also an appropriate occasion to review David’s classic psalm of repentance:

## Psalm 51

**Sin:** There are three major Hebrew word groups that communicate the concept of sin in the Old Testament. Each of them is illustrated in these chapters. In fact each of them is used in David’s prayer of confession, Psalm 51.

The principle Hebrew word for sin, חָטָא *chatta’ah*, means to miss the mark. It assumes the existence of a divine standard which, for some reason, a person does not live up to. The other major terms also assume the existence of a divine standard and describe human actions in relation to it.



פָּשָׁע *pasha*, “transgressions,” in the vocabulary of sin indicates a conscious revolt or rebellion against the divine standard. And עֲוֹן *avon*, “iniquity,” or “guilt,” is a deviation from or twisting of the standard. Strikingly, in Scripture the language of sin is also the language of redemption. The word *chatta’at* means both “sin” and “sin offering.” Thus it speaks both of human failure, and the wonderful provision by God of forgiveness through an offering that removes our guilt. How beautifully both these realities are illustrated in David’s life.

- 1 [To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.] Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.
  - 2] Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
  - 3] For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me.
  - 4] Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.
  - 5] Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- “...conceive...”: Heb. “warm me.”
- 6] Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
  - 7] Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
  - 8] Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.
  - 9] Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.
  - 10] Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
  - 11] Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

Cf. Romans 11:29. Can we, as NT believers, pray v.11?

- 12] Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.
- 13] *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.
- 14] Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

Cf. Isaiah 26:19-21. (“Blood” = “bloodguiltiness.”)

- 15] O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.
- 16] For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering.
- 17] The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

- 18] Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.
- 19] Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

David had penetrated to the heart of the issue. His was no mere legal relationship with some “bookkeeper God” who cares only about balanced books. David did not rush to ask what he could do for God to make up for his sin! Instead David realized that God’s concern is *personal* rather than *legal* in nature. A contrite heart means more to God than all anyone might possibly do for Him.

With David’s heart attitude corrected, forgiveness could flow and the Spirit of God could work again to cleanse David. When he was cleansed, God would work through David to do good for Zion and for all his people.

We cannot, and God did not, condone David’s sins and failings. But we can praise God for moving David to share honestly with us. Through David we learn fresh lessons about the grace of God, and we are reminded that you and I are invited to come boldly to the Lord too that He may meet us—and our needs.

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) Why does God hold up as examples men and women who have such obvious flaws?
- 2) What are the key lessons from these two chapters? How does this relate to our own experience?
- 3) Why wasn’t David punished for his sin?
- 4) What four women are distinguished by being listed in the genealogy of the Messiah?
- 5) Why would Ahithophel, David’s counselor, later turn against him by encouraging Absalom’s rebellion?
- 6) In Psalm 51, David prayed, “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me” (v.11). Can we pray that? Why not?

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) Discuss other examples of failures of leaders from which we can learn:
  - a) in the Bible;
  - b) in our current experience.
- 2) What was the probable complicity of Bathsheba in David’s failure(s).
- 3) What was the extent of Joab’s guilt in the murder of Uriah?
- 4) Are children, prior to the age of accountability, saved? Why?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) In what ways would “the sword never depart from David’s house”?
- 2) Map out the genealogies—and their differences—of the Messiah in Matthew and Luke. (Don’t confuse Nathan the prophet from Nathan the son of David.)
- 3) Relate this to the blood curse in Jeremiah 22:30.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read chapter 13, the sin and murder of Amnon, and Absalom’s estrangement from David, chapter 14, as well as his capture of the kingdom, chapter 15. (Note the role of Ahithophel as Absalom’s counselor.)

## Session 5 2 Samuel 13-15

## Review

Because of his affair with Bathsheba David had been told by Nathan the prophet that the sword would never depart from his house (12:10). It was not long before he began to experience the heartbreaks of rape and murder within his own family.

## 2 Samuel 13 Sin and Murder of Amnon

- 1] And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name *was* Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.

Absalom and Tamar were David’s children by Maacah, the daughter of the king of Geshur (3:3); Amnon was David’s son by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess (3:2). [The case of Abram and Sarai shows that marriage between the children of the same father by different mothers was sanctioned by early Hebrew custom, though forbidden by the Levitical legislation (Lev 18:9).]

- 2] And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she *was* a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her.

He had few opportunities to see the unmarried members of the royal harem, probably none to see Tamar alone.

- 3] But Amnon had a friend, whose name *was* Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David’s brother: and Jonadab *was* a very subtil man.
- 4] And he said unto him, Why *art* thou, *being* the king’s son, lean from day to day? wilt thou not tell me? And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.
- 5] And Jonadab said unto him, Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him, I pray thee, let my sister Tamar come, and give me meat, and dress the meat in my sight, that I may see *it*, and eat *it* at her hand.
- 6] So Amnon lay down, and made himself sick: and when the king was come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand.

It is evident that the king’s children lived in different houses. Probably each of the king’s wives lived with her children in one particular compartment of the palace.

“A couple of cakes”: The Hebrew word used for cakes is from the root *lbb*, “heart.” Perhaps these were heart-shaped cookies. Also, there may be a play on words in the use of this term.

- 7] Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, Go now to thy brother Amnon’s house, and dress him meat.
- 8] So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house; and he was laid down. And she took flour, and kneaded *it*, and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes.

- 9] And she took a pan, and poured *them* out before him; but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, Have out all men from me. And they went out every man from him.
- 10] And Amnon said unto Tamar, Bring the meat into the chamber, that I may eat of thine hand. And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought *them* into the chamber to Amnon her brother.
- 11] And when she had brought *them* unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister.
- 12] And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly.
- 13] And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee.

The Law forbade this type of marriage (Lev 18:9), but it may not have been strictly observed at this time. (The Talmud overcomes the difficulty by assuming that Tamar was of illegitimate birth.)

- 14] Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her.

Such loss of a maiden's virginity was an unbearable curse in Israel (Deut 22:13-21). Moreover, such relationships between half brothers and sisters were strictly forbidden in the Law. Those guilty of such things were to be cut off from the covenant community (Lev 20:17). In this case, of course, Tamar was innocent since she had been assaulted (Deut 22:25-29).

- 15] Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her *was* greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone.
- 16] And she said unto him, *There is* no cause: this evil in sending me away *is* greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But he would not hearken unto her.
- 17] Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this *woman* out from me, and bolt the door after her.
- 18] And *she had* a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters *that were* virgins apparelled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her.

This was also said of the coat of Joseph: The famous tableau of Beni Hasan (Egypt) shows that the typical dress of nomads in patriarchal Palestine was a many-colored garment. However, none of the garments in this tableau are ankle or wrist length. This feature is distinct in the case of Joseph and Tamar, and signifies something special.

- 19] And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that *was* on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying.

To add insult to injury and in further violation of the Law, Amnon sent Tamar away. This suggests not only his desire to have her gone from his immediate presence but also his repudiation of her as a bride. He had humbled a virgin and the Law demanded that he marry her (Deut 22:29). Tamar's reaction to all this—putting ashes on her head and tearing her royal robe (cf. 2 Sam 13:31; Job 2:12)—shows the intensity of her sorrow at losing her purity and perhaps any further opportunity for marriage.

Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.

Deuteronomy 22:29

- 20] And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister: he *is* thy brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house.

Recommending her to be silent about it and not publish her own and her family's dishonor, he gave no inkling of his angry feelings to Amnon. But all the while he was in secret "nursing his wrath to keep it warm," and only "biding his time" to avenge his sister's wrongs, and by the removal of the heir-apparent perhaps further also his ambitious designs.

- 21] But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth.

He was content merely to be angry, since he himself had been guilty of adultery. However, his lack of appropriate action stemmed from his indulgent affection toward his son and his habitual failure to discipline members of his family.

- 22] And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.

When Tamar got to the house of her brother Absalom, he suspected at once what had happened. No doubt he knew full well the propensities of Amnon. With plans for vengeance already developing in his own mind he counseled his sister to remain silent about the matter and to stay in his house.

David somehow heard what had happened, and though he was furious he did not invoke the penalty prescribed by the Law. Perhaps this was because Amnon was his oldest son. But Absalom hated Amnon.

- 23] And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baalhazor, which *is* beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons.

- 24] And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now, thy servant hath sheepshearers; let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants go with thy servant.
- 25] And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he would not go, but blessed him.
- 26] Then said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee?
- 27] But Absalom pressed him, that he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him.

Since Absalom had shown no sign of desiring revenge, David reluctantly permitted Amnon to attend the party.

- 28] Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smit Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant.
- 29] And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule, and fled.

[This is the first mention of a mule in the Bible. The horse was used mainly for drawing war chariots; the ass was the mount of royalty (1 Kgs 1:33). According to the law of Lev 19:19, the breeding of hybrids was forbidden.]

Two long years passed before Absalom effected his plan for retaliation. He hosted a festival to celebrate the time of sheepshearing, a custom observed in Israel from earliest times (Gen 38:12-13; 1 Sam 25:2, 8). He invited and urged his father David to join him at Baal Hazor (about six miles south of Shiloh), the scene of the festivities, but David declined. Absalom then requested that Amnon attend in David's place, a request the king reluctantly granted. In the midst of the merriment the servants of Absalom, on a prearranged signal, attacked and murdered the unsuspecting Amnon.

Thus a murder avenged a rape.

- 30] And it came to pass, while they were in the way, that tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left.

Having heard that Absalom had slain all of his other sons David fell into inconsolable anguish. Even when he later knew that the report was unfounded and that only Amnon was dead he could not be comforted (v. 36).

- 31] Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent.
- 32] And Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother, answered and said, Let not my lord suppose *that* they have slain all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of Absalom this hath been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar.
- 33] Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead.
- 34] But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept the watch lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came much people by the way of the hill side behind him.
- 35] And Jonadab said unto the king, Behold, the king's sons come: as thy servant said, so it is.
- 36] And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of speaking, that, behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice and wept: and the king also and all his servants wept very sore.
- 37] But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And *David* mourned for his son every day.
- 38] So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years.
- 39] And *the soul of king David* longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

Absalom meanwhile fled from Baal Hazor and sought and found refuge with Talmai, his maternal grandfather, at Geshur, east of the Sea of Kinnereth.

The law as to premeditated murder (Num 35:21) gave him no hope of remaining with impunity in his own country. The cities of refuge could afford him no sanctuary, and he was compelled to leave the kingdom. There Absalom remained for three years though his father, finally consoled, longed to have him return again.

**Geshur** ("bridge"): A region NE of Bashan, adjoining Argob and Aram, conquered by Jair of Manasseh, but left in the hands of the original inhabitants (Josh 13:13; Deut 3:14; 2 Sam 15:8).

The Geshuri bordering on the Philistines (Josh. 13:2), and invaded by David (1 Sam 27:8), were distinct from those NE of Gilead. Yet there may have been some connection, a portion of the Geshurites possibly passing southwards. At least David in his wandering life formed an alliance with Talmai king of Geshur by marrying Maachah his daughter, by whom he had his handsome but worthless son Absalom and his daughter Tamar.

David's attack on the southern Geshurites, or else his stay near Moab (1 Sam 22), may have first brought him into connection with Talmai king of the northeastern Geshur (2 Sam 3:3; 13:37.) The wild nature of Absalom accords with the wild home and stock from whence he sprang; there he fled after murdering Amnon. Geshur was probably part of the rugged and stony Argob, now Lejah, where amidst those basaltic fastness the Geshurites would be secure from the Israelites in the plains.

## 2 Samuel 14

### Absalom's Estrangement from David

The king was strongly attached to Absalom; now over his sorrow for the violent death of Amnon, he was desirous of again enjoying the society of his favorite son, who had now been three long years absent. But a dread of public opinion and a regard to the public interests made him hesitate about recalling or pardoning his guilty son; and Joab, whose discerning mind perceived this struggle between parental affection and royal duty, devised a plan for relieving the scruples, and, at the same time, gratifying the wishes, of his master.

- 1] Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart *was* toward Absalom.

Joab thought Absalom had the best chance to succeed to the throne. And he felt that if he could put Absalom in the position to succeed to the throne, Absalom in turn would cancel the threat of judgment hanging over him.

- 2] And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead:

Joab grew up in the vicinity of Tekoah, about six miles south of Bethlehem. He may have known this woman from earlier days. Tekoah later was the home of the Prophet Amos (Amos 1:1).

- 3] And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth.

It was evident to all that David sorely missed his exiled son but no one knew how to achieve Absalom's return and a reconciliation. Finally Joab, always a tactician, convinced or commanded a clever woman from

Tekoah to disguise herself as a mourner and go to the king with a story which he himself concocted and put in her mouth.

- 4] And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king.  
5] And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I *am* indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead.  
6] And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and *there was* none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him.  
7] And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband *neither* name nor remainder upon the earth.

Having gained access to the king, the woman related to him that she had had two sons, one of whom had murdered the other: This meant that the surviving son was liable to blood vengeance at the hands of relatives. Since she was a widow, this would mean the elimination of her own source of support (expressed by the figure of speech, They would put out the only burning coal I have left).

Perhaps even more serious, she would have no heir to carry on the name and memory of her dead husband. The extinction of a family was the most dreaded of all misfortunes. The institutions of concubinage and levirate marriage were both instituted to forestall this possibility. The birth of a son to carry on the family name was regarded as most important.

- 8] And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee.  
9] And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, O king, the iniquity *be* on me, and on my father's house: and the king and his throne *be* guiltless.

From the woman's answer we infer that David had put her off with a promise because he saw that if he defended the guilty son, he would become involved in his guilt. The mother pleaded for the king's help and offered to bear personally any guilt.

- 10] And the king said, Whosoever saith *ought* unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more.

David empowered the woman to bring her prosecutors into the royal presence.



- 11] Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the LORD thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, *As* the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.

Obviously touched by her story, David told the woman to return home in peace. He would issue an order to resolve the matter. However, she was not convinced that she had fully made her point and pressed her case even further. In the event of any miscarriage of justice, she said, she and her family would bear the responsibility. That is, if the circumstances really did require vengeance (Num 35:9-21), she wanted the king to know that he would not be legally or morally culpable if he did not stop it from being carried out.

Patiently David heard her out and again assured her that if anyone tried to prosecute the case he would have to answer to the king. Relentlessly she continued, however, till she elicited from David a formal oath that her accused son would suffer not even the slightest harm: *As* surely as the LORD lives (cf. comments on 1 Kgs 1:29) not one hair of your son's head will fall to the ground.

- 12] Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak *one* word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on.
- 13] And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished.

Satisfied at last, the woman boldly accosted the king with the meaning of her parable. In granting amnesty to an unknown murderer it was now incumbent on him that he do the same for his own son Absalom. There are circumstances, she said, under which the death penalty need not be applied, particularly where premeditation was not involved (Num 35:15).

Though that was not relevant here, as Absalom had plotted Amnon's death long in advance, there was still the principle of mercy: God does not take away life; instead, *He devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from Him.*

- 14] For we must needs die, and *are* as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect *any* person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.
- 15] Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, *it is* because the people have made me afraid: and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid.

- 16] For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man *that would* destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God.
- 17] Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so *is* my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the LORD thy God will be with thee.

Having got the king pledged, she avowed it to be her design to satisfy the royal conscience, that in pardoning Absalom he was doing nothing more than he would have done in the case of a stranger, where there could be no imputation of partiality. The device succeeded; David traced its origin to Joab; and, secretly pleased at obtaining the judgment of that rough, but generally sound-thinking soldier, he commissioned him to repair to Geshur and bring home his exiled son.¶

- 18] Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak.
- 19] And the king said, *Is not* the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman answered and said, *As* thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from ought that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid:
- 20] To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord *is* wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all *things* that *are* in the earth.

Then, to make David think that her remarks about Absalom were only incidental to her real purpose, the woman reminded the king of the fear that prompted her to come in the first place. She coupled this reminder with effusive flattery of the king's wisdom (My lord the king is like an angel of God in discerning good and evil, v. 17; cf. v. 20). But David discerned that "the woman doth protest too much" and asked if Joab had something to do with all this. Found out in her treachery she had to admit it was true.

David's recognition of Joab as the instigator lies no doubt not only in the general's recognized craftiness but in the fact that David was surely aware of Joab's interest in Absalom's return.

- 21] And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.
- 22] And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.
- 23] So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.
- 24] And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.

David had no alternative but to act on the sentiment he had expressed to the woman concerning forgiveness, even though he had been conned into doing so. He sent Joab to bring his alienated son back.

But when Absalom returned David refused to meet him personally or to let him visit the palace. Perhaps David felt that too ready a reconciliation would lead the people to believe that he did not view Absalom's crime with sufficient seriousness.

- 25] But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.
- 26] And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because *the hair* was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.
- 27] And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

In order to emphasize Absalom's attributes, features that should have made him attractive to David and which later proved irresistible to the people, the historian described Absalom as handsome in every way. The reference to his long hair (weighing 200 shekels, i.e., about five pounds, when he infrequently cut it) is especially made to prepare for Absalom's peculiar undoing—later he was caught by his head (perhaps his hair) in the branches of an oak tree (18:9).

His profound love for his violated sister Tamar also testifies to his attractiveness; he named his own daughter after her. [The LXX adds a note that this second Tamar became the wife of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, and bore him Abia. According to I Kgs 15:2, Maachah the daughter of Solomon married Rehoboam.] ?

Tamar, The daughter of Absalom, the favorite wife of Rehoboam, and mother of Abijah (1 Kgs 15:2; 2 Ch 11:20, etc.): Evidently "daughter" must here be understood as "granddaughter," according to a common oriental usage. Tamar was the only daughter of Absalom.

[If Tamar married Uriel of Gibeah (2 Chr 13:2), then Maacah was her daughter. In that case the name Micaiah in this passage would be either a copyist's error or a variant of Maacah. She must have been a woman of strong personality. Unfortunately, her influence was cast upon the side of idolatry. She maintained her position in the palace, however, till the reign of her grandson Asa. Possibly she acted as regent during his

minority. Ultimately, she too was degraded by him for an act of peculiar infamy (1 Kgs 15:13; 2 Chr 15:16).]

- 28] So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.
- 29] Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come.
- 30] Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.
- 31] Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto *his* house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?
- 32] And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? *it had been* good for me *to have been* there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be *any* iniquity in me, let him kill me.
- 33] So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.

After two more years of estrangement from his father, Absalom twice sought Joab's aid in bringing about a final resolution of their differences. Rebuffed each time, Absalom resorted to dramatic action—he set Joab's barley field on fire, which did get the general's attention. Joab then intervened with the king and at last made it possible for Absalom to be reunited with his father. The meeting was at least superficially cordial, but as subsequent events demonstrated, David's long-delayed acceptance of his son came too late. Absalom was embittered and resolved to do whatever was necessary to make David pay for his intransigence.

## 2 Samuel 15 Absalom's Capture of the Kingdom

- 1] And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

Absalom began a vigorous campaign to win the loyalty of the tribes. His method was to meet persons in the gate, the court of ancient Israel, find out their native cities, suggest to them his interest and availability, and hope that they would return to their district and become ambassadors for his cause.

- 2] And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was *so*, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city *art* thou? And he said, Thy servant *is* of one of the tribes of Israel.

Absalom's first move to achieve his purposes of revenge was to make himself conveniently available (by the side of the road leading to the city gate, with his chariot and 50 men) to hear the complaints of the citizens.

- 3] And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters *are* good and right; but *there is* no man *deputed* of the king to hear thee.
- 4] Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

Cleverly he insinuated that the king was too busy to hear them and that David had not even provided lesser judges to adjudicate their cases. If only he were chief judge, he would listen to one and all and deal impartially in every matter.

- 5] And it was *so*, that when any man came nigh *to him* to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.
- 6] And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

Absalom showed the people great affection by kissing them when they came to bow before him. Thus he gradually gained the support of the masses.

- 7] And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron.

[For 4 years Absalom had been weaning the people away from David. (The "4 years" (NIV) appears in the Lucian recension of the LXX and the Syriac version [*Peshitta*], but the Heb. has "40 years," a figure which might refer to an event early in David's life, perhaps to his own anointing at Bethlehem, 1 Sam 16:13.)]

Hebron still bore a grudge against David because he had removed the seat of government to Jerusalem. Also, the allied clans of the Negev, through whose good offices David first mounted the throne, were jealous of the northern tribes—now the dominant partner in the united kingdom—because of their power and influence with the king.

- 8] For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.

One day, feeling that his popular support was overwhelming, Absalom requested and received permission from the king to go to Hebron, allegedly to pay a vow to the LORD which he had made while in exile in Geshur (cf. 13:37).

- 9] And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.
- 10] But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

Now the time was ripe for revolution. When Absalom reached Hebron, the very center of the Davidic dynasty, where David had begun his reign (2 Sam 3:2-3), Absalom announced his usurpation of power (15:10).

- 11] And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, *that were* called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.
- 12] And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, *even* from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

The 200 men who accompanied him from Jerusalem were ignorant of his plans. Apparently they were won over as was Ahithophel, David's own chief counselor. [Remember: Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather! (11:3; 23:34). His espousal of Absalom's cause is usually attributed to a desire to avenge the disgrace David had brought upon his family, as well as the murder of his son-in-law, Uriah.]

- 13] And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.
- 14] And David said unto all his servants that *were* with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not *else* escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

News quickly reached the capital that Absalom had effected a coup and that all was lost. David, apparently convinced of the hopelessness of his cause and anxious to spare the city from destruction, made his plans to depart and head east for the Transjordan.

David's decision to abandon Jerusalem has been a constant puzzle to historians:

- Some have supposed that his courage failed temporarily;
- Some, that he had valid grounds for suspecting the loyalty of the population, perhaps still predominantly Jebusite;
- Others, that he wished to spare the city the horrors of a siege;
- And still others, that, if the revolt prospered in the north while Absalom was marching on him from the south, he would be caught in Jerusalem as in a trap.

- 15] And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants *are ready to do* whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.

The fact that David's loyal followers did not question his decision indicates that his decision was not based on cowardice but upon the cold calculation of an experienced military specialist.

- 16] And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, *which were* concubines, to keep the house.

He left behind 10 housekeeping concubines.

- 17] And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.  
18] And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.

The people, including 600 Gittites: These were the men who had gathered around David on his flight from Saul and emigrated with him to Gath. (1 Sam 23:13; 27:2; 30:9). Afterward they lived with him in Ziklag, and eventually followed him to Hebron and Jerusalem. In all probability, they formed a separate company of well trained veterans, or a kind of bodyguard, in Jerusalem and were well known as the Gittites,

- 19] Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou *art* a stranger, and also an exile.  
20] Whereas thou camest *but* yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth *be* with thee.  
21] And Ittai answered the king, and said, *As* the LORD liveth, and *as* my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.  
22] And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that *were* with him.

He tried to persuade his Philistine mercenary officer, Ittai of Gath, to remain behind since he had nothing to fear from Absalom. But to his credit Ittai refused, preferring to honor his commitment of loyalty by joining the king in banishment. Ittai's reply is magnanimous in light of the apparent hopelessness of David's cause. Ittai felt undying gratitude to David for his benefactions in earlier days.

- 23] And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.  
24] And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites *were* with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city.

Zadok means *righteous*. This family of priests won out over the house of Abiathar (of the line of Eli) in the reign of Solomon. The New Testament Sadducees claimed descent from the house of Zadok.

- 25] And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me *both* it, and his habitation:  
26] But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, *here am* I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.  
27] The king said also unto Zadok the priest, *Art not* thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.  
28] See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me.  
29] Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there.

Zadok and Abiathar, the two chief priests, were sent back to Jerusalem by David. He knew that if it was God's will for him to return as king, he would do so. Hence there was no need to keep the ark away from the sanctuary. After all, it was David and not the Lord who was going into exile. Besides, the priests' two sons (Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; could carry to David any revelations which God might give their fathers. (There will be an amusing contrast involving Ahimaaz as a rapid, but vacuous, messenger in the next session.)

## Review: Eli & His Line

Sprung from Ithamar, Aaron's younger surviving son (Lev 10:1,2,12). [Compare Abiathar (1 Kgs 2:26,27; 1 Chr 24:3; 2 Sam 8:17); Compare Eleazar's genealogy, wherein Eli and Abiathar do not appear (1 Chr 6:4-15; Ezra 7:1-5).]

No high priest of Ithamar's line is mentioned before Eli, whose appointment was of God (1 Sam 2:30). His grandson Ahitub succeeded (1 Sam 14:3).

**Abiathar.** Ahitub's grandson, was thrust out by Solomon for his share in Adonijah's rebellion and the high priesthood reverted to Eleazar's line in Zadok (1 Kgs 2:35). The transfer was foretold to Eli by the unnamed man of God first, and by the child Samuel next (1 Sam 2:3): a punishment from God, because though Eli reprov'd his wicked sons Hophni and Phinehas in word he did not in act, put forth his authority as a judge to



punish, coerce, and depose them, “because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.” Another part of the curse, “I will cut off the arm of thy father’s house that. there shall not be an old man in thine house,” was being fulfilled in David’s days, when “there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar (16) than of the sons of Ithamar” (8)(1 Chr 24:4).

Eli’s grace shone in the meekness with which he bowed to the Lord’s sentence, “It is the Lord, let Him do what, seemeth Him good.” His patriotism and piety especially appear in his intense anxiety for the safety of the ark; “his heart trembled for the ark of God.” The announcement after the battle, of the slaughter of the people and even of his sons did not so much overwhelm him as that of the ark of God: instantly “he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck broke and he died; for he was old and heavy.”

The Hebrew Scriptures make his term of office as judge 40 years; the Greek Septuagint 20 years. Some reconcile the two by making him co-judge with Samson for 20 years, and sole judge for 20 more years. He was 98 years of age at his death.

## Warning to Parents

His failing and its penalty are a warning to all parents, even religious ones, and all in authority, to guard against laxity in ruling children and subordinates in the fear of the Lord, punishing strictly, though in love, all sin, jealous for God’s honor even at the cost of offending man and of painting natural parental feeling. Condoning sin is cruel to children as well as dishonoring to God. *Children will respect most the parent who respects God.* Perhaps Eli clung to office too long, when through age he was no longer able vigorously to fulfill it. He who cannot rule his own house is unfit to rule the house of God (1 Tim 3:5).

- 30] And David went up by the ascent of *mount Olivet*, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that *was* with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

David and his loyal supporters in the meantime made their way east across the Kidron Valley and up the Mount of Olives. His covered head and unshod feet indicated his depth of despair.

- 31] And *one* told David, saying, Ahithophel *is* among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

To make matters worse David discovered that his trusted adviser Ahithophel had joined Absalom’s cause. To contravene Ahithophel’s effectiveness David recruited Hushai, a friend who asked to accompany the king on his way, and persuaded him to return to Jerusalem and attach himself to Absalom’s court as a counselor. His mission would be to contradict the advice of Ahithophel and to communicate Absalom’s plans to Zadok and Abiathar whose sons (cf. v. 27) in turn would relay them to David (cf. 17:21; 18:19).

- 32] And it came to pass, that *when* David was come to the top of *the mount*, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head:
- 33] Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me:
- 34] But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; *as I have been* thy father’s servant hitherto, so *will* I now also *be* thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.
- 35] And *hast thou* not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, *that* what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king’s house, thou shalt tell *it* to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.
- 36] Behold, *they have* there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok’s *son*, and Jonathan Abiathar’s *son*; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear.
- 37] So Hushai David’s friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

David then continued in his flight, but Absalom took firm control of Jerusalem.

David’s forced flight from Jerusalem not only put his own kingship in jeopardy, but it also opened the door to further contention for the throne between the dynasties of Saul and David. Absalom was apparently in the process of seizing power in Jerusalem but this by no means implied that he could also gain control over the Northern tribes. In fact the shakeup in David’s own family began to revive hope among the Saulites that they might be able to recover the kingdom for themselves.

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) How did the fact that David’s children have different mothers affect the episodes in this chapter? (Cf. Lev 18:9)
- 2) Discuss the implications from the *Torah* for Tamar (Lev 20:17; Deut 22:13-21, 25-29).



- 3) How did David fail in dealing with the sins in his family?
- 4) Distinguish and compare three Tamars in the Scriptures.

### Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) Discuss the pressures on David during Absalom's revolt. Have any of you had comparable experiences?
- 2) Was David precipitous or premature in his flight from Jerusalem?
- 3) Explore Psalm 3: Which verse or verses in this psalm most accurately reflects how each person felt during the experiences just described?
- 4) Discuss the role and motivations of Joab with respect to Absalom, etc.

### Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Explore the role of "multicolored" coats in the Bible: Joseph, Tamar, Christ.
- 2) Summarize the rise and roles of Zadok vs. Abiathar (from the line of Eli) in the priesthood.

### Preparation for Next Session:

Absalom consolidates his power: read Chapters 16-18.

## Session 6 2 Samuel 16-18 Absalom's Rebellion

### Review

David's forced flight from Jerusalem not only put his own kingship in jeopardy, but it also opened the door to further contention for the throne

between the dynasties of Saul and David. Absalom was apparently in the process of seizing power in Jerusalem but this by no means implied that he could also gain control over the Northern tribes. In fact the shakeup in David's own family began to revive hope among the Saulites that they might be able to recover the kingdom for themselves.

## 2 Samuel 16 Absalom's Consolidation of Power

This is first evident in the reaction to David's withdrawal of Saul's grandson Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan to whom David had shown kindness for the sake of his love for Jonathan. While the king was heading east across the Judean hills, he was met by Mephibosheth's servant Ziba who, out of gratitude to David for his past kindness toward him (Chapter 9), now provided the fugitive king donkeys and provisions for the journey.

- 1] And when David was a little past the top *of the hill*, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred *loaves* of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine.
- 2] And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses *be* for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink.
- 3] And the king said, And where *is* thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.

But Ziba also brought David the sad report that Mephibosheth had turned against the king, hoping that in the midst of the turmoil occasioned by the revolution he might be able to retrieve Saul's old throne (16:3).

There was an air of plausibility in Ziba's story: Many on whom the king had conferred favors were now deserting him. No wonder, therefore, that in the excitement of momentary feeling, believing, on the report of a slanderer, Mephibosheth to be among the number, he pronounced a rash and unrighteous judgment by which a great injury was inflicted on the character and interests of a devoted friend. But, as we will learn in the next chapter (19:24-30), this was mischievous self-serving deceit.

## Mephibosheth (Summary)

When Saul and Jonathan fell at Gilboa Mephibosheth was but five years old. His nurse at the sad tidings took him up and fled; but in her haste she let him fall from her shoulders [Josephus *Antiquities*, vii. 5, section 5], and he became lame of both feet (2 Sam. 4:4; 9:13). He had been for a considerable time living in obscurity with Machir in Lodebar beyond Jordan, near Mahanaim, his uncle Ishbosheth's seat of government.

When David, through Ziba, heard of him, and for the sake of Jonathan, and his promise respecting Jonathan's seed (1 Sam 20:15,42), he restored to him all the land of Saul and admitted him to eat bread at his table at Jerusalem continually.

Ziba, from being a menial of Saul's house, had managed to become master himself of 20 servants; with these and his 15 sons, he, by David's command, tilled the land for Mephibosheth, for though Mephibosheth was henceforth David's guest, and needed no provision, he had a son Micha (1 Sam 9; 1 Chr 8:34,35) and a retinue to maintain as a prince.

Mephibosheth's deformity, added to the depression of Saul's family, produced in him an abject fear and characteristic humility in sad contrast to the bygone greatness of Saul's house. It is a retribution in kind that this representative of Saul's family called himself before David by the same contemptuous title which David in self abasement once used before Saul, "dead dog" (1 Sam 24:14; 2 Sam 9:8;).

Seventeen years subsequently, in Absalom's rebellion, Ziba rendered important service to David by meeting him as he crossed Olivet, with two strong he donkeys (*chamowr*) ready saddled for the king's use, bread, raisins, fruits, and wine. With shrewd political forecast, guessing the failure of the rebellion, Ziba gained David's favor at the cost of Mephibosheth, whom he *misrepresented* as staying at Jerusalem in expectation of regaining the kingdom (2 Sam 16:1-4).

Mephibosheth had everything to lose and nothing to gain from Absalom's success. A cripple and a Benjamite could never dream of being preferred by Judah to the handsome Absalom; interest and gratitude bound him to David. Ziba had it completely in his power to leave him unable to stir from Jerusalem during the rebellion, by taking away the asses; the king and his friends were gone.

- 4] Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine *are* all that *pertained* unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee *that* I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

David in hasty credulity then stripped from Mephibosheth the generous pension he had given him earlier and bequeathed it all to Ziba (cf. 9:7, 13). As we will learn in Chapter 19, upon David's return to Jerusalem Mephibosheth made known the true state of the case: that Ziba had deceived him when he desired to saddle the donkey and go to the king, and had slandered him (2 Sam 19:24-30). The same depressed spirit of Mephibosheth appears in 2 Sam 19:26-28: his squalid appearance, with unwashed feet, unattended beard, and soiled clothes, indicating the deepest mourning ever since the king departed, attested his truthfulness.

David saw his error, but had not the courage to rectify it altogether. Ziba's service to him in his extremity outweighed his perfidy to Mephibosheth. Impatiently (for conscience told him he had been unjust to Mephibosheth and still was only half just) David replied, "why speakest thou any more of thy matters? Thou and Ziba divide the land." (David's non-mention of Mephibosheth on his death bed is doubtless because Mephibosheth probably had died in the eight years that intervened between David's return and his death.)

- 5] And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name *was* Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

David next encountered Shimei, another relative of Saul, who greeted the fleeing monarch and his officials at Bahurim (east of the Mount of Olives) with curses and physical abuse, pelting them with stones. The misfortune of his family, and the occupation by David of what they considered their rightful possessions, afforded a natural, if not a justifiable cause for this barrage of rude insults and violence. He upbraided David as an ambitious usurper, and charged him, as one whose misdeeds had recoiled upon his own head, to surrender a throne to which he was not entitled.

- 6] And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men *were* on his right hand and on his left.  
7] And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial:  
8] The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou *art taken* in thy mischief, because thou *art* a bloody man.

He taunted David with the observation that since he was a man of blood God was now avenging the death of Saul and his family by driving David from power. This was untrue, of course, for David had not raised his hand against Saul, whom he regarded as the anointed of the Lord, but had taken every measure to deal graciously with Saul's survivors. Shimei's real complaint, as is evident from his own admission, was that David sat on the throne of Saul ("Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned").

- 9] Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

Cursing the king was a capital crime. Abishai, David's bodyguard and nephew, begged the king to let him decapitate Shimei (whom Abishai called a dead dog, i.e., worthless and despised; cf. 9:8).

- 10] And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

(Remember, the "sons of Zeruiah" were "half-relatives" from Jesse's marriage to Zeruiah, the Ammonite: Cf notes on 2 Samuel 2.)

One thing is remarkable, that he acted more independently of the sons of Zeruiah in this season of great distress than he could often muster courage to do in the days of his prosperity and power.

- 11] And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now *may this* Benjamite *do it?* let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.  
12] It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

But David forbade him to do so, observing that it might well be that Shimei cursed as an instrument of God Himself. If Absalom, David's own son, was trying to kill him, why should the cursing of Shimei be of concern?

God would someday vindicate, but for now there must be no recompense for Shimei's evil conduct. An (undesigned?) "coincidence" appears between David's language in the history and in the independent psalms:

- Ps. 109:17,28, "let them curse, but bless Thou";
- Ps. 25:18, "look upon mine affliction," etc.).

A fingerprint of genuineness.

- 13] And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.

Shimei continued his cursing, stone-throwing, and dirt-tossing as David continued on the road to his destination.

- 14] And the king, and all the people that *were* with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

## A Glimpse of Destiny(!):

When we get to the Book of Esther, we encounter a dramatic contest between the evil Haman, Xerxes' prime minister or vizier, and Esther's benefactor, Mordecai.

It is interesting that Haman was an "Agagite," a royal Amalekite, the last of his proud house to occupy a position of influence and power (Josephus, *Antiquities*, xi 6, § 5), and thus a descendant of the Agag whom Saul failed to kill, and the reason he lost the kingdom. Mordecai was a descendant of Shimei whom David declined to kill (Esther 2:5). If David had let Abishai kill Shimei, perhaps the drama of Haman's attempt to exterminate the Jews might have ended differently!?

The story doesn't end in this chapter: In 19:6, Shimei wisely was the "first of the house of Joseph" to meet David on his victorious return over Jordan. A thousand Benjamites, and Ziba with his 15 sons and 20 servants, were with him. He fell down before the king, confessing his sin and begging David not to "impute iniquity" to him, or remember and take to heart his perversity [spiritually compare Mt 5:25; Ps 32:1-6].

Abishai would again have slain Shimei, but David felt his day of restoration to the kingdom was no day for avenging wrongs, and said "thou shalt not die."

However, on his deathbed David felt that though he forgave Shimei the personal wrong, yet public justice required his punishment in some form, for David was not likely, in going to appear before God, to cherish revenge after having spared him twice when he might justly have slain him. To Solomon he committed the fulfillment of the duty unfulfilled by himself; "thou knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him." The impunity of Shimei, as of Joab, had brought the law into discredit, for Shimei was living in court favor at Jerusalem, "thou hast with thee

Shimei” (1 Kgs 2:8). Anticipating from Shimei’s restless spirit that he would attempt some fresh lawlessness, David says, “his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.”

[However, as Solomon did not put him to death but gave him a chance of life, some understand “not” after “bring thou down,” taken from the former clause “hold him not guiltless,” and “bring not down his hoar head,” etc. So in 1 Sam 2:3, where two prohibitions come together, the negative is expressed only in the first clause and understood in the second.]

Solomon bound him on pain of death to build a house, and stay at Jerusalem, and not cross the Kedron which separated him from the road to his old abode at Bahurim. After the lapse of three years Shimei went after two slaves of his, who had fled to Achish of Gath. His breach of his own oath brought on him the king’s threatened penalty; he was slain by Benaiah. Thus he brought, “on his own head” his wickedness towards David which David had left unavenged; justice had its course so by “taking away the wicked from before the king, his throne was established in righteousness” (Prov 25:5; 1 Kgs 2:36-46; Ps 7:16; Ezek 17:19).

- 15] And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

Meanwhile Absalom arrived in Jerusalem and was immediately met by Hushai, a friend of David who was pretending to be loyal to Absalom. His mission as *contradictor* to the counsel of Ahithophel, Absalom’s chief adviser, would be implemented later.

- 16] And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king.

“God save the king” was a cry of respect for the royal personage. The usual explanation is that it means, “May the king live for a long time!” The repetition of this phrase by Hushai expressed his feigned enthusiasm for the new regime.

- 17] And Absalom said to Hushai, *Is* this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?  
18] And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide.  
19] And again, whom should I serve? *should I* not *serve* in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father’s presence, so will I be in thy presence.

- 20] Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do.  
21] And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father’s concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that *are* with thee be strong.

Ahithophel advised Absalom to assume the right to the throne through a public seizure of the royal harem. This was the custom employed in ancient times to demonstrate possession of the throne. It was not actually viewed with abhorrence by the Israelites, whose feelings on such matters were blunted by the practice of polygamy. Following this counsel would cause an irreparable breach between father and son. Ahithophel’s advice was colored by his own agenda toward David.

- 22] So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel.  
23] And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, *was* as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so *was* all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

When Absalom asked Ahithophel what he should do, his adviser told him to lie with his father’s concubines, an evidence of his succession (cf. 3:6-7), advice which Absalom quickly followed. The words of counsel which Ahithophel gave were given credence as though they came directly from God, so highly regarded was his wisdom. Hushai’s assignment would be difficult indeed.

## 2 Samuel 17 Absalom’s Pursuit of David

- 1] Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night:  
2] And I will come upon him while he *is* weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that *are* with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only:  
3] And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest *is* as if all returned: *so* all the people shall be in peace.

The second bit of advice which Ahithophel gave Absalom was that he, Ahithophel, should be delegated to pursue David in order to kill him and return everyone else. With their king dead his followers would certainly capitulate and return to Jerusalem peacefully. Apparently Ahithophel’s plan was to quickly surround the forces of David and create such a panic that all would flee, making it possible to slay only David. This would make it easier to win over the remnant of David’s cohorts.



4] And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel.

He thought the advice of Ahithophel was excellent. If David had been attacked that very night, he would have been but twelve or fifteen miles from the capital, without food and ammunition, and with his forces in a serious state of disorganization. The rebellion of Absalom would have secured its objective and David would have met with certain defeat.

5] Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith.

Eager for a second opinion, Absalom called for Hushai and asked him if Ahithophel's counsel was wise.

6] And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do *after* his saying? if not; speak thou.

7] And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given *is* not good at this time.

8] For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they *be* mighty men, and they *be* chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father *is* a man of war, and will not lodge with the people.

Hushai told Absalom that David and his men, far from being exhausted, would be more courageous and fearsome than ever. Hushai's argument was that David's men would fight like a cornered bear: like a wild bear whose cubs have been stolen, the king, Hushai said, would be enraged over the loss of his kingdom. To move against him now would be foolish. The Syrian bear is said to be particularly ferocious. (The Septuagint adds, "and like a savage sow in the plain," which is more like the Greek than the Hebrew and must have been added by a later writer.)

9] Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some *other* place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom.

10] And he also *that is* valiant, whose heart *is* as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father *is* a mighty man, and *they* which *be* with him *are* valiant men.

Initial casualties, which were certain to occur, would cause Absalom's men to despair of victory and thus his cause would be defeated.

11] Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that *is* by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person.

It would be far better, Hushai continued, for Absalom to wait until he could amass a huge army and then attack.

12] So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that *are* with him there shall not be left so much as one.

The verb "light upon him" is used of swarms of locusts (Ex 10:14) or flies and bees settling down (Isa 7:18, 19).

13] Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there.

"Bring ropes": In besieging a town, hooks or cranes were often thrown upon the walls or turrets, by which, with ropes attached to them, the besiegers, uniting all their force, pulled down the fortifications in a mass of ruins.

"We will draw it into the river": Hushai said that the city in which David might hide would be completely destroyed. Most cities were built on hills, and the penalty of a conquered city was to be treated as is expressed in the words of Mic 1:6: "I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley." David and his host could then be destroyed even if it meant dragging their place of refuge into the Valley.

14] And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite *is* better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.

Absalom was at once struck with Hushai's sagacity and decided to follow his instruction and reject that of Ahithophel. Obviously this was the Lord's doing, to frustrate Ahithophel's advice and bring disaster on Absalom.

15] Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counselled.

16] Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that *are* with him.

Hushai immediately communicated Ahithophel's advice and his own to Zadok and Abiathar, who then sent their sons Jonathan and Ahimaaz from En Rogel (south of Jerusalem) to David with the message that he



must hasten his flight. En-Rogel: Perhaps the fuller's spring, mentioned in I Kgs 1:9. It was in the valley of the Kidron, below the village of Silwan, near the junction of the valleys of Kidron and Hinnom. It served as a landmark on the boundary between Judah and Benjamin.

- 17] Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by Enrogel; for they might not be seen to come into the city: and a wench went and told them; and they went and told king David.

“A wench”: literally, *a maidservant*. The definite article in the Hebrew may denote simply the maid chosen for the task, or it may denote a particular servant—taken from the household of one of the priests—who could be entrusted with the mission. She could go to the fountain for water without exciting suspicion, since the drawing of water was carried on mainly by women.

- 18] Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court; whither they went down.

But the young men were spotted and their errand was reported to Absalom. Thanks to the boldness and kindness of a woman in the village of Bahurim east of the Mount of Olives (cf. 16:5), they escaped detection by hiding in a dry well.

- 19] And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known.

Ground corn: this was bruised or husked wheat or barley, which the people prepared by pounding it in a mortar.

- 20] And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where *is* Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find *them*, they returned to Jerusalem.
- 21] And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you.

Then they made their way to David, who by now was at the Jordan.

- 22] Then David arose, and all the people that *were* with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan.

Without delay David and his followers crossed the river where they sought refuge at Mahanaim.

- 23] And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled *his* ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

Back at Jerusalem, Ahithophel, crushed because his counsel to Absalom had been spurned, committed suicide in his hometown by hanging himself. Ahithophel had worked himself into a difficult predicament. If Absalom had been victorious, Ahithophel would have had to give way to Hushai; if David had been victorious, Ahithophel would have been called to account for his advice concerning the proposed capture of David. The people knew his precarious position and understood the thinking of a hopelessly defeated man.

It may be noted that the suicide of Ahithophel did not exclude him from regular burial in the family sepulchre. The care with which Ahithophel prepared himself and his family and the burial in the family plot suggest that this suicide was not frowned upon. The number of suicides in the Bible is extremely few.

- 24] Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

Probably David chose to go to Mahanaim because it was fortified and also had served as the capital of Israel under Ish-Bosheth (2:8). There could well have been a residue of good feeling there toward David because of David's past favors to Saul's family, especially to Mephibosheth (9:10-13).

This city was significant in patriarchal days and was the scene of one of Jacob's stops on his return to Palestine to meet with his brother Esau. At this place Jacob saw in a vision the divine messengers encircling and protecting his camp, and he named it Mahanaim (*Twin Camps*).

“Absalom passed over Jordan”: It is not said how long an interval elapsed, but there must have been sufficient time to make the intended levy (v.11) throughout the kingdom.

- 25] And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa was a man's son, whose name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah Joab's mother.

By the genealogy it appears that Amasa stood in the same relation to David as Joab, both being his half-nephews. Of course, Amasa was Absalom's cousin, and though himself an Israelite, his father was an Ishmaelite (1 Chr 2:17).

- 26] So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead.  
27] And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim,

**Shobi**—must have been a brother of Hanun. Disapproving, probably, of that young king's outrage upon the Israelite ambassadors, he had been made governor of Ammon by David on the conquest of that country.

**Machir**—Son of Ammiel, dwelling in Lo-debar (2 Sam 9:4,5), a wealthy landowner who protected Mephibosheth, until assured of the friendly intentions of David (compare Josephus *Antiquities*, VII, ix, 8). He may have been a brother of Bathsheba as an Ammiel was the father of Bathsheba. (In the parallel passage, 2 Sam 11:3, by transposition of the two parts of the name, he is called Eliam, meaning "my God is a kinsman.")

**Barzillai**—A Gileadite of Rogelim, (25 miles north of Mahanaim) conducted David over Jordan, but being an old man of 80 years of age, he declined David's invitation to come to live in the capital, and sent instead his son Chimham (2 Sam 19:31-39). David before his death charged Solomon to "show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai." (1 Kgs 2:7).

- 28] Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched *corn*, and beans, and lentiles, and parched *pulse*,  
29] And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that *were* with him, to eat: for they said, The people *is* hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

These three men were chieftains tributary to David, bound to him by ties of loyalty and obligation. Besides, they may have preferred to cast their lot with David, a known quantity, as opposed to Absalom, an unknown.

## 2 Samuel 18

### Absalom's Defeat and Death

- 1] And David numbered the people that *were* with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.

The hardy mountaineers of Gilead came in great numbers at the call of their chieftains, so that, although without money to pay any troops, David soon found himself at the head of a considerable army. A pitched battle was now inevitable.

David, now in security and with his supplies replenished, quickly took measures to reorganize his troops and prepare them for the inevitable encounter with Absalom. This means not merely that he counted his forces but that he mustered and reviewed them.

"And set captains": This was the usual military arrangement, and it corresponds to the civil arrangement suggested by Moses in Ex 18:25.

- 2] And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.

A third of his troops he assigned to Joab; a third to Abishai, Joab's brother; and a third to Ittai. It is interesting that David gave one third of the army to Ittai, a man of Gath, who had proved loyal to the cause of the king in the exile.

David determined that he would lead the attack personally, but his comrades dissuaded him.

- 3] But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now *thou art* worth ten thousand of us: therefore now *it is* better that thou succour us out of the city.

He was worth 10,000 of them, they said. If half of them died all would go on. But if he died the whole cause would be lost.

- 4] And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands.  
5] And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, *Deal* gently for my sake with the young man, *even* with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

Reluctantly David agreed to remain behind but commanded his officers that they not harm Absalom in the battle. Apparently David still looked upon Absalom as but a boy. He treated the rebellion as a youthful

escapade which he could forgive rather easily. However, Joab and the army regarded the insurrection as having serious portents.

- 6] So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;

The encounter soon followed in the forest of Ephraim, a deserted place in the vicinity of Mahanaim (cf. 17:24, 27) but otherwise unknown. This wood, of course, was on the east of Jordan. Its name was derived, according to some, from the slaughter of the Ephraimites by Jephthah—according to others, from the connection of blood with the trans-Jordanic Manasseh.

- 7] Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand *men*.  
8] For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

As terrible as Absalom's losses were by the swords of David's heroes (18:7), they were even greater from the elements of that inhospitable terrain.

“The wood devoured”: a great multitude perished in the pits and precipices. The thick forest of oaks and terebinths, by obstructing the flight, greatly aided the victors in the pursuit.

- 9] And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that *was* under him went away.

Absalom himself, in a frantic attempt to escape on his mule, rode beneath a large oak tree and became tangled in its branches. He was suspended in midair. To ride a mule was a mark of royalty (1Kgs 1:33, 38). This mule may have belonged to David.

“His head”: The tradition that Absalom was caught by his hair comes from Josephus.

- 10] And a certain man saw *it*, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.  
11] And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest *him*, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten *shekels* of silver, and a girdle.  
12] And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand *shekels* of silver

in mine hand, *yet* would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none *touch* the young man Absalom.

- 13] Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against *me*.

A soldier of David found him in this predicament but because David had ordered his men not to hurt Absalom, the soldier refused to harm him further.

- 14] Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he *was* yet alive in the midst of the oak.

Joab was not so reluctant, however, and thrust Absalom in the heart with three javelins. The deed, partially done by Joab, was completed by his bodyguard. Being a violation of the expressed wish, as well as of all the fond paternal feelings of David, it must have been deeply offensive to the king, nor was it ever forgotten (1Kgs 2:5); and yet there is the strongest reason for believing that Joab, in doing it, was actuated by a sincere regard to the interests of David, both as a man and a monarch.

- 15] And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.

Immediately 10 of his attendants struck Absalom to make sure he died.

- 16] And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people.

Knowing that by the death of the usurper there was no occasion for further bloodshed, he put an end to the pursuit and thereby evinced the temperate policy of his conduct.

However harsh and unfeeling to the king Joab may appear, there can be no doubt that he acted the part of a wise statesman in regarding the peace and welfare of the kingdom more than his master's private inclinations, which were opposed to strict justice as well as his own interests.

Absalom deserved to die by the divine law (De 21:18, 21), as well as being an enemy to his king and country; and no time was more fitting than when he met that death in open battle.

17] And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.

“A great pit”: This may have been a cave or an unused cistern. Some think the heaping of stones on Absalom’s grave was symbolic of the stoning which was the legal penalty due a rebel son (Deut 21:20, 21). It is still a custom in the East for passers-by to cast stones on the grave of a criminal.

18] Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which *is* in the king’s dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom’s place.

Absalom had already erected a memorial (a pillar called Absalom’s Monument) to his own name in the King’s Valley (traditionally the Kidron Valley immediately east of Jerusalem) because he had no son to carry on his name. However, “The King’s Vale” is also given as an alternate name for the vale of Shaveh in Gen 14:17 (ASV). Here the King of Sodom met Abraham. The location of the valley is unknown. (The Tomb of Absalom still to be seen in the Kidron Valley is of Roman making and is most likely of a later tradition.)

19] Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies.

20] And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king’s son is dead.

When Ahimaaz, David’s courier (cf. 15:36; 17:17), announced that he would set out to bear word to David of the army’s victory Joab forbade him to do so, ostensibly to spare the king unnecessarily early grief over his son’s death. Joab may also have been concerned for the well-being of the young messenger for the bearer of such bad news might not be well received.

21] Then said Joab to Cush, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cush bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.

Instead Joab dispatched an unnamed Cushite (an Ethiopian) who was obviously known to David. He was either considered more knowledgeable as to what had happened to Absalom (see 18:29) or was more expendable.

22] Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cush. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?

23] But howsoever, *said he*, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cush.

Ahimaaz was not to be denied, however, and finally received permission to go. Taking a shortcut, he outran the Cushite. The route taken by Cush was the shorter route, but it led over hill and dale. The route taken by Ahimaaz lay along the bed of the Jordan River valley and could be traversed more quickly.

24] And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone.

25] And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he *be* alone, *there is* tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

26] And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold *another* man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

27] And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He *is* a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

Both runners were seen from a distance, and when David understood that the nearer was Ahimaaz he assumed that the message he was conveying was good because Ahimaaz himself was good.

28] And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed *be* the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.

The assumption was unfounded, however, for when Ahimaaz finally was able to deliver his message all he could do was speak in general terms of the victory over Absalom.

29] And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king’s servant, and *me* thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what *it was*.

30] And the king said *unto him*, Turn aside, *and* stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

31] And, behold, Cush came; and Cush said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

32] And the king said unto Cush, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cush answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do *thee* hurt, be as *that* young man *is*.

The details were left to the Cushite who presently arrived and shared with the king the grisly news that Absalom and his confederates were dead.

- 33] And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

Overwhelmed, the king retired to an upper room where he privately poured out his heart before God in unremitting grief. The depths of his love for his rebel son are couched in his lament, If only I had died instead of you. Two of David's sons, Amnon (13:28-29) and Absalom (18:15), died violent deaths as a consequence of David's sin (12:10).

#### **Addendum:**

### **Absalom a Type of the Antichrist?**

(as suggested by Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Antichrist*)

**First**, the meaning of his name is very significant. "Absalom" means "father of peace." A careful reading of his history reveals the fact that, again and again, he posed as a man of peace, while war was in his heart. So the Antichrist will pose as the promised prince of peace, and for a time it will appear that he has actually ushered in the Millennium. But before long his violent and bloody character will be revealed.

**Second**, Absalom was the son of David, and therefore a Jew. But **third**, Absalom was a son of David by Maacah, the daughter of the Gentile king of Geshur (2 Sam 3:3).

[Geshur ("bridge"): A region NE of Bashan, adjoining Argob and Aram, conquered by Jair of Manasseh, but left in the hands of the original inhabitants (Josh 13:13; Deut 3:14; 2 Sam 15:8). "Geshur at Aram" (Hebrew); i.e., bordering on Syria of Damascus (1 Chr 2:23). The Geshurites bordering on the Philistines (Josh 13:2), and invaded by David (1 Sam. 27:8), were distinct from those NE of Gilead. Yet there may have been some connection, a portion of the Geshurites possibly passing southwards.) At least David in his wandering life formed an alliance with Talmai king of Geshur by marrying Maachah his daughter, by whom he had his handsome but worthless son Absalom and his daughter Tamar. David's attack on the southern Geshurites, or else his stay near Moab

(1 Sam 22), may have first brought him into connection with Talmai king of the northeastern Geshur (2 Sam 3:3; 13:37.) **Fourth**, the wild nature of Absalom accords with the wild home and stock from whence he sprang; there he fled after murdering Amnon.]

**Fifth**, Absalom was a man of blood (2 Sam 13, etc.). **Sixth**, Absalom sought to obtain the kingdom by flatteries (2 Sam 15:2-6); cf. Dan. 11:21, 23. **Seventh**, he cloaked his rebellion by a pretense of religion (2 Sam 15:7, 8). **Eighth**, he was the immediate cause of the faithful followers of David being driven from Jerusalem into the wilderness (2 Sam 15:14-16). **Ninth**, he reared up a pillar unto himself (2 Sam 18:18). **Tenth**, he met with a violent end (2 Sam 18:14).

\* \* \*

### **Study Questions**

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) How could David have sensed that Ziba's representation of Meshibosheth's treason was misrepresented? What motives might Ziba have had to do so?
- 2) Why didn't David allow Shimei to be killed (in accordance with the law)? How did this impact the events centuries later during the time of Esther?
- 3) Contrast the counsel of Hushai and Ahithophel, and the motives of each.
- 4) Trace the history and events that took place at Mahanaim.

### **Discussion Questions**

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) How should David have handled Absalom's murder of Amnon? Should he have executed Absalom for murder? Or should he have tried to restore him through confession and forgiveness? What were David's mistakes?
- 2) Discuss David's self-doubt and discouragement; how did it affect his leadership?
- 3) Explore Psalm 3 and relate each verse to the feelings of each person involved in Absalom's revolt.



- 4) Discuss David's strengths and his weaknesses, as revealed in his life to this point.

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Explore the family relationships among the descendants of Nahash, the Ammonite; Jehiel, the Benjaminite; and Jesse of Judah; and how these relationships impacted the events of 2 Samuel.
- 2) Explore "types" of the Antichrist that appear in the Biblical text. (Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Antichrist*, is a good place to begin.)

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read chapters 19-21. Review David's career in all of 2 Samuel.

## Session 7 2 Samuel 19 - 21

With Absalom's rebellion crushed, David returns to reestablish his authority. With the disarray in his family, the aspirations of Saul's descendants, as well as the loyalties of the northern tribes, remain an issue.

### 2 Samuel 19 David's Return

- 1] And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.
- 2] And the victory that day was *turned* into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son.

David's elation at having regained the kingdom was undercut by his despair at having lost a son.

- 3] And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.

So chagrined were David's soldiers that they slipped out of Mahanaim as though they were losers instead of winners.

- 4] But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!

This was the customary way of expressing one's grief. The muffled head marked the grief which shut one from the external world. Perhaps it symbolized the sorrow unto death that David felt for his son Absalom. His vocal expression suggested to the people that the king wished that he might die and be with Absalom.

In a sense the covered head of David symbolized the shroud of Absalom's burial. Veils worn by mourning widows are a modernization of this old custom. However, the suggestion in modern mourning is that one desires to be alone as one grieves. For the same reason, at funerals the members of the immediate family are seated in a separate room.

- 5] And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines;
- 6] In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.
- 7] Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now.

Joab, who had known before the frustration of doing what he felt was right only to have the king turn it against him (cf. 3:27-39; 14:28-33), confronted David and rebuked him for his insensitivity toward his officers and people. It appeared, Joab said, that David would have been more satisfied if Absalom had lived and all of them had died. In order to salvage what little morale was left, Joab urged David to appear before the troops and assure them that he appreciated their selfless service to him.

The severe military discipline of Joab hindered his understanding the grief of a father for his son. David viewed the events as they related to himself, and felt keenly the loss of his son Absalom. Joab viewed the same events in the light of their meaning to the people of Judah and the family of David. He urged the king to conceal his personal feelings in the best interests of the political situation. Joab feared the reaction of the populace to the expressed sentiment of David for Absalom. *Conse-*

*quences more serious than Absalom's rebellion might follow if the mob were stirred to anger by their king's lack of appreciation for their bravery on his behalf.*

- 8] Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.
- 9] And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom.

The short-lived rebellion had failed to gain its objective, and the element of discontent spread throughout the country. The movement to restore David to power was not unanimous. Some felt that he had lost his ability to rule; others looked upon him as having earned the right to rule by his past service.

- 10] And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?

The remnants of Absalom's army had made their way home and together with the rest of Israel found themselves in a quandary. They had rallied behind Absalom, but now he was dead. Moreover, David had provided effective leadership in the past. So why were the elders not bringing the king back?

- 11] And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, *even* to his house.

“The elders of Judah”: These were the men who could win the tribe of Judah back to the cause of David. Their reticence derived from the fact that Judah had played a prominent part in the insurrection. David commissioned the religious leaders, Zadok and Abiathar, to make his appeal to Judah through the tribal elders.

- 12] *Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?*

Sensing the local officials' indecision, David sent Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, to them to ask why they were so reluctant to restore David when it was clear that the people were willing and ready to do so. The text of their message is too brief to disclose what approaches these two religious delegates made. Perhaps they reminded the elders of the

movement of Israel to restore David and hinted that there might also be a movement started to make a northern city the capital instead of Jerusalem. David had once before moved his capital from Hebron to Jerusalem, and another move could happen again. David's action in turning to his own tribe was natural and essential in his return to power. However, some have looked upon his conciliatory action toward Judah as a deed breeding fresh rebellion.

- 13] And say ye to Amasa, *Art* thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab.

No doubt to shore up his support from Judah especially, David told the priests to promise Amasa, his nephew (cf. 17:25; 1 Chr 2:17), that he would succeed Joab as commander of the army (2 Sam 19:13). Joab, also David's nephew through another half sister (1 Chr 2:16), had by now become completely discredited in David's eyes because of his open disagreements with David's policies.

This course of action was a bold stroke of military policy to secure the loyalty of the general of the rebel army. By so doing, David hoped to secure the allegiance of the rebel army and at the same time to demote Joab for his murder of Absalom. The move has also been questioned as hardly prudent, for Joab was not the type of man to acquiesce quietly, nor had the loyalty of Amasa been proved.

- 14] And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as *the heart of one man*; so that they sent *this word* unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants.
- 15] So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

The mission of Zadok and Abiathar was successful. With one accord (as though they were one man) the people of Judah not only invited David to return to rule over them but they also sent a delegation to the Jordan River to meet him and help him cross over the river.

- 16] And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which *was* of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David.
- 17] And *there were* a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king.
- 18] And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan;

- 19] And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.
- 20] For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.

Included in the delegation were Shimei (v. 16), who had cursed David on his way into exile (16:5-8), and Ziba (19:17), Mephibosheth's servant who had refreshed David along the way (16:1-4). Shimei, realizing the peril in which he now found himself because of David's restoration, prostrated himself before the king and sought his forgiveness, a favor David temporarily granted over the objections of Abishai (19:21-23; [but cf. David's last instruction to Solomon, 1 Kgs 2:8-9].)

"The house of Joseph": The ten tribes of Israel were distinguished from Judah by the title of the most powerful tribe among them—Ephraim, son of Joseph.

- 21] But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD'S anointed?
- 22] And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I *am* this day king over Israel?
- 23] Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him.

The large number of Benjamites who accompanied Shimei (2 Sam 19:17) and who were identified by him (v. 20) as elements of the whole house of Joseph (i.e., Israel) indicates the first steps taken by the tribe of Benjamin to link itself with Judah.

- 24] And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came *again* in peace.

The neglect of his appearance was the outward sign of extreme grief.

- 25] And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?
- 26] And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant *is* lame.
- 27] And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king *is* as an angel of God: do therefore *what is* good in thine eyes.
- 28] For all *of* my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst

thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?

Next came Mephibosheth who protested to David that Ziba had lied about Mephibosheth's motive for remaining in Jerusalem when the king was forced to leave. Saul's grandson said he had not tried to use the occasion as an opportunity to bring his grandfather's dynasty back into control as Ziba had reported (see 16:3).

- 29] And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

Whether this was true or not cannot be determined, but David at least was somewhat convinced by Mephibosheth and agreed to return at least half of the estate he had threatened to withdraw from him (19:29; cf. 16:4).

- 30] And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.
- 31] And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan.
- 32] Now Barzillai was a very aged man, *even* fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he *was* a very great man.

Then Barzillai the Gileadite, who had provided David with supplies when he had crossed into Transjordan (17:27-29), presented himself to the king.

- 33] And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.

Grateful to the 80-year-old for all his goodness, David urged him to move to Jerusalem and live out his days on government sustenance.

- 34] And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?
- 35] I *am* this day fourscore years old: *and* can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?
- 36] Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward?
- 37] Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, *and be buried* by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.

Barzillai protested that he was too old to make such a move and preferred to die in his own land. He asked, however, that Kimham, perhaps his son, go in his place and be similarly rewarded. This David was more than happy to do. Cf. I Kgs 2:7. Josephus says that he was Barzillai's son.

- 38] And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, *that* will I do for thee.
- 39] And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.
- 40] Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

At length David and his entourage crossed the Jordan and arrived at Gilgal where they were met by a throng of citizens from both Judah and Israel.

- 41] And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away, and have brought the king, and his household, and all David's men with him, over Jordan?

The latter were upset that the Judeans claimed David as one of their own to the exclusion of the other tribes.

- 42] And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king *is* near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king's *cost*? or hath he given us any gift?
- 43] And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more *right* in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

When the Judeans replied that David was part of their own flesh, the Israelite counter-response was that there were 10 tribes of them and therefore their claim was much more weighty. Besides, they said, they had been the first to insist that David return to rule over the nation, a claim for which, incidentally, there is an apparent basis in the preserved narrative (vv. 9-10).

The argument reveals the fickleness of the people who had first acquiesced in, if not actively supported, the rebellion of Absalom and now clamored to be first to welcome David back. But it also indicates the depth of the schism which was developing between Israel and Judah, a rift which eventually produced two separate kingdoms.

## 2 Samuel 20 Reestablishment of Authority

- 1] And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name *was* Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.

He blew a trumpet: Sheba, a worthless son of the family of Becher, the second son of Benjamin, blew the trumpet to call Israel to revolt from the house of David. This rebellion was perhaps engendered by the traditional hostility between the house of Saul and the house of David, the Benjamites and the Judahites. Sheba was interested in wresting the power from Judah and regaining it for Benjamin.

Every man to his tents, O Israel he employed the words used in the successful rebellion led by Jeroboam (I Kgs 12:16). The meaning is: "Men, let's turn in our uniforms and K-rations and return to the farms, and I shall head up a resistance group to secure better portions for us all." (The use of tents is strange in that Israel had long since left the nomadic form of life for the settled life of Canaan. The terminology of the past culture persists in every society, and Sheba was using a *clique* that had propaganda and sentimental value. "The pen is mightier than the sword," et al.)

- 2] So every man of Israel went up from after David, *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

The contention between the Israelite and Judean delegations at Gilgal became so heated that a Benjamite by the name of Sheba announced a revolutionary movement against David and led the Israelites to desert the king.

- 3] And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women *his* concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

David and the Judeans then continued their homeward journey to Jerusalem alone. Once there, David reasserted his monarchical claims by, among other things, regathering his harem (cf. 15:16). He provided for them, but remained sexually aloof because they had been appropriated by his son Absalom (16:21-22). These were the ten women whom



Absalom had violated in broad daylight as a signal to Israel that he had taken over the throne.

David could not return these women to the royal harem, nor did he wish to do so. Instead, he made provision for their support and declared them to be widows for the remainder of their natural life. This action of David had in it the elements of both generosity and tragedy. Life in a king's harem carried with it the possibility of dire consequences as well as the reward of luxurious living. These women were confined in order to protect David from further embarrassment or predicament in regard to them. They were accorded the right of support because their violation was perpetrated by Absalom and was not initiated as a harem intrigue to overthrow the ruling king.

- 4] Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present.

The first matter of state was urgent. It was clear to David that he must overcome the rump movement that had been initiated by Sheba at Gilgal. So he ordered Amasa, his new commander (19:13), to reorganize the army of Judah within three days so that Sheba might be brought to heel.

- 5] So Amasa went to assemble *the men of Judah*: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

Was Amasa, cousin of Joab, whom Absalom had appointed captain of his host, lacking in initiative; or was the assembling of the army a more difficult task than David had expected? It is probable that some men questioned the strength of David's return to power, while others resented the change of generals, preferring Joab to Amasa. David had already promised Amasa the position of Joab (19:13, 14). Perhaps Amasa's delay was the result of military and political hindrances set up by those who questioned the wisdom of David's rash promises.

- 6] And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than *did* Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

When Amasa was unable to do so in the allotted time Abishai, at David's command, took his own personal elite troops (cf. 18:2) and set out for the North (20:7). David still superseded Joab by giving the orders to Joab's brother. However, once the campaign was under way, Joab, with Abishai's consent, resumed his place as commander-in-chief.

- 7] And there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.  
8] When they *were* at the great stone which *is* in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle *with* a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out.

On the way they met Amasa at Gibeon, about five miles north of Jerusalem. Joab, though having been demoted and replaced by Amasa, was present.

- 9] And Joab said to Amasa, *Art* thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.  
10] But Amasa took no heed to the sword that *was* in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth *rib*, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.

Pretending to greet Amasa warmly, Joab killed him with his dagger. This part of the text is quite difficult to translate accurately, and hence the nature of Joab's treachery is difficult to ascertain. Joab, it seems, had a second weapon concealed under his military cloak, while he openly wore another sword in its sheath. Presumably he deliberately let fall the sword he wore openly to banish any doubt or suspicion from the mind of Abishai. Thus Joab gained revenge for his loss of rank.

What is particularly heinous is the fact that Joab and Amasa were cousins, sons of two of David's half sisters (1 Chr 2:16-17). Again, then, the prophecy of Nathan came to pass: "The sword will never depart from your house" (2 Sam 12:10).

- 11] And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that *is* for David, *let him go* after Joab.

Joab at once took command as though nothing had happened.

- 12] And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still.  
13] When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.



The troops were stopping in the road to look at Amasa's corpse. So heartless Joab dragged Amasa's body to a field and threw a garment over him, without bothering to bury him.

- 14] And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to Bethmaachah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him.

[As is seen in verses 15, 18, this should be read, *Abel of Beth-maachah*. It is also known as "Abel-maim" (*meadow of waters*) in 2 Chr 16:4. This town fell to the forces of Ben-hadad of Syria (1 Kgs 15:20) and afterward to the Assyrian Tiglath-pileser. The mention of Maachah may suggest a connection with the Syrian kingdom of that name (10:6). Its location is about twelve miles north of Lake Huleh and four miles west of Toll el Kadi (Dan) at the site of the village of Abil.]

- 15] And they came and besieged him in Abel of Bethmaachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that *were* with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down.

Summoning reinforcements, Joab marched as far north as Abel Beth Maacah (four miles west of Dan and north of the Sea of Kinnereth) through the territory of the Berites (site unknown). There he found Sheba safely ensconced behind the city wall, apparently prepared to face a long siege.

The purpose of this mound was to enable them to reach the highest point of the wall in order to break down the wall and force an entrance. This type of warfare is depicted on the bas-reliefs of the siege of Lachish.

- 16] Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee.  
17] And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, *Art* thou Joab? And he answered, *I am he*. Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear.  
18] Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask *counsel* at Abel: and so they ended *the matter*.  
19] *I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful* in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?

While attempting to batter down the walls Joab was contacted by a wise woman from the city who yelled over the wall that she wanted to talk with him. She told Joab of her own fame as a purveyor of wisdom (v. 18) and then asked why he was destroying her city which had always been loyal to Israel. The city, as a mother in Israel, was a prominent one.

The woman went on to suggest to Joab that before he began the siege and possible destruction of the town, he should ask the inhabitants of Abel whether or not they intended to fight for Sheba and his cohorts. This was to be done, according to the legislation of Deut 20:10ff. Her second implication was that Joab ought to have taken into consideration the peaceableness and fidelity of the citizens of Abel and not to destroy peaceloving citizens and members of the nation of God.

[She was indeed a wise woman and in sympathy with the wise woman of Tekoa, who undertook to spare needless bloodshed. Compare, too, the intercession of Abigail in the cause of the farm families of Carmel and vicinity. Women have generally pled the cause of peace and argued for peaceful arbitration to avert bloodshed. Ecclesiastes (lit., *The Preacher*) said that wisdom is better than strength, and perhaps used this incident for his reference in Eccl 9:13-16.]

- 20] And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy.  
21] The matter *is* not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, *even* against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.

To this Joab replied that he was not attacking the city itself but only wanted Sheba, the rebel who had presumed to lead Israel away from its king. If she would assist in delivering Sheba over to him, he would end his siege.

- 22] Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast *it* out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

Successful in his mission, Joab stopped the siege and returned to Jerusalem.

- 23] Now Joab *was* over all the host of Israel: and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites:

Apparently David tolerated Joab's assassination of Amasa for Joab appears in this list of David's royal administrators. Joab was over Israel's entire army. Benaiah son of Jehoiada was leader of David's special troops, the Kerethites and Pelethites (see comments on 8:15-18). Benaiah eventually replaced Joab at the beginning of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 2:35; 4:4).

24] And Adoram *was* over the tribute: and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder:

Adoniram (Heb. “Adoram”) was in charge of conscripted labor gangs, a position he retained until the reign of Rehoboam (I Kgs 4:6; 12:18)

25] And Sheva *was* scribe: and Zadok and Abiathar *were* the priests:

Jehoshaphat was the recorder (or chronicler). Sheva was official scribe, evidently having succeeded Seraiah (2 Sam 8:17). Zadok and Abiathar remained as chief priests.

26] And Ira also the Jairite was a chief ruler about David.

Finally Ira the Jairite was David’s special minister, having succeeded the king’s own sons in that capacity (see comments on 8:18 for the meaning of *klohen* in 20:26, usually rendered “priest”).

## 2 Samuel 21 Slaughter and Burial of Saul’s Sons

1] Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, *It is* for Saul, and for *his* bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

Ezekiel 14:21 lists the sword (war), famine, the noisome beast, and pestilence as the four sore (heavy) judgments of God for the sins of Jerusalem. In I Kgs 8:35-37, Solomon refers to the cloudless heaven that could bring famine as the result of the sins of his people.

At some point in David’s reign, probably toward the end, Israel was afflicted by a three-year drought. The precise time of this famine is not given. (“In the days of David” could refer to any time during his lengthy reign. Some would place it after David’s acquaintance with Mephibosheth (cf. v. 7), but before Absalom’s rebellion.) When David inquired of the LORD as to its cause, the LORD revealed that it came as punishment for Saul’s violation of the covenant made with the Gibeonites back in the days of Joshua (Josh 9:15-21).

At that time Israel, under Joshua’s leadership, had just destroyed Jericho and Ai and was about to attack the Amorite federation of the

Canaanite hill country. The people of Gibeon, who were in the direct line of Joshua’s conquest, pretended to be faraway aliens and so escaped annihilation. Moreover, they tricked Joshua into making a covenant with them whereby they would forever serve Israel in menial tasks but could never be harmed. Though the covenant was made deceitfully, its binding nature was recognized by both the Israelites and the Gibeonites.

Saul, in an action not recorded in the biblical account, had slain some Gibeonites during his tenure (2 Sam 21:1). This constituted the breaking of a covenant and was to be reckoned as unexpiated murder, which, according to Deut 21:7-9, defiled the land.

- 2] And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites *were* not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)
- 3] Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?

When David learned that the famine had come on Israel as punishment for that covenant violation, he asked the Gibeonite leaders what he should do for them. The literal meaning of the Hebrew verb for “to make atonement” is *to cover*. This “covering” was intended to hide the offense from the eyes of the offended party, and to withdraw the guilt of the offender from the gaze of a God who avenged the wrong. [The atonement could be made by a settlement in money, which gave rise to the expression, “blood money,” or by the application of the law of revenge.]

If the latter method had been used in this case, David could have given the Gibeonites the same number of men Saul had executed. These could have been men in disfavor at the court of David or men chosen by lot. However, the Gibeonites would not be satisfied with anything less than revenge on the family of Saul. They accused Saul of trying to exterminate them (an ancient policy used to invalidate the law of revenge). They wanted to see his descendants dealt with exactly as he had sought to deal with them (cf. v. 5).

This demand for exact justice was in keeping with the legislation of Num 35:31, 32, which insists upon a strict regard for human life. The payment of money by the murderer to the family of the murdered was a dangerous precedent, which could be abused by the rich. Men with money could “beat the rap.”

- 4] And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, *that* will I do for you.
- 5] And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us *that* we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel,
- 6] Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, *whom* the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give *them*.

They responded by denying any interest in silver or gold. Nor, they said, could they, as Israel's vassals, take vengeance into their own hands. Instead they asked that seven male descendants of Saul be given over to them so that they could practice the age-old tradition of *lex talionis*—eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and life for life (Ex 21:23-25).

- 7] But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD'S oath that *was* between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.

David recognized the propriety of their demand, but he also had to balance against it the pledge he had made to Jonathan that he would forever preserve his seed (1 Sam. 20:15-16). So David spared Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, but singled out others of Saul's offspring for execution.

- 8] But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite:

Rizpah: A concubine of Saul. Ishbosheth once accused Abner of having illicit relations with Rizpah in an attempt to assume the throne of Saul in his (Ishbosheth's) place. This accusation led to Abner's transferring his loyalty to the house of David. (cf. 2 Sam 3:7).

“Sons of Michal” presents a problem. According to the Biblical record, Michal died childless as a result of her estrangement from David. Her attitude toward her husband in his dealings with the priesthood and the ark of the covenant brought about strained relations. He did not divorce her, but assigned to her a special house and had no further marital relations with her. [The *Targum* recognized the problem here and suggested that Michal raised the five sons of her deceased sister Merab, whom Merab had born to Adriel.]

“The Meholathite”: That is, of Abel-meholah, a town in the Jordan Valley, near Beth-Shan, famous as the birthplace of Elisha (1 Kgs 19:16).

- 9] And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell *all* seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first *days*, in the beginning of barley harvest.

These seven sons and grandsons of Saul were publicly executed by the Gibeonites at the beginning of barley harvest, early in the spring.

- 10] And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

As their bodies hung suspended from their places of exposure, Rizpah, mother of the first two (v. 8), refused to take them down and bury them. Rizpah took cloth, made a tent, and stood watch from April to October, till the fall rains came and she knew that the sin of Saul's household had been expiated and that no further claim would be made on the lives of her family. The fact that the bodies remained where they were until it rained suggests that God's curse had been on the land and now rested on the executed sons of Saul for “anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse” (Deut 21:23). The coming of the rain meant that the curse was ended and the corpses could be taken down and buried. Though the Law stated that a body hung from a tree must be removed by sundown (Deut 21:23), it implied punishment of an individual for his personal crime.

This case had nothing to do with any personal act of murder but rather with violation of a covenant, the results of which brought God's displeasure on the whole nation and required vengeance of a public and extended nature.

- 11] And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done.
- 12] And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabeshgilead, which had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa:

When David saw the devotion of Rizpah in protecting the bodies of her sons from the carnivorous birds and beasts, he was reminded of the shameful exposure of the bodies of Saul and his son Jonathan on the walls of Beth Shan where the Philistines had displayed them after the battle of Gilboa (1 Sam 31:11-13). Though the people of Jabesh Gilead had brought the bodies away for burial, the remains were interred far from Gibeah, Saul's family home. To show that he had no personal hostility

toward the house of Saul, David resolved to bring their bones back from Jabesh Gilead and bury them in the sepulcher of Saul's father Kish, at Zelah in Benjamin.

- 13] And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged.

This place is enumerated among the towns of Benjamin in Josh 18:28, but it has not yet been identified. Beih Jala near Bethlehem has been suggested, but this is in Judah, not Benjamin. It is strange that Saul's burial was not at Gibeah, his birthplace.

- 14] And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God was intreated for the land.

After this was done God again answered prayer on behalf of the nation.

- 15] Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint.

The chapter concludes with a final word about David's hostility toward the Philistines. No longer the robust young warrior of former days, David now was old and weak.

- 16] And Ishbibenob, which *was* of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear *weighed* three hundred *shekels* of brass in weight, he being girded with a new *sword*, thought to have slain David.

A Philistine giant, Ishbi-Benob, advanced on David with a spear (with a spearhead weighing 300 shekels or about seven and one-half pounds) and a new sword (the Heb. in v. 16 is lit., "armed with a new thing," without specifying the weapon), threatening to kill him.

- 17] But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

Just in time Abishai came to David's aid and killed the giant. David's warriors advised him never again to take to the field of battle. His death would mean the end of his leadership, a tragedy synonymous with the snuffing out of Israel's illumination (the lamp of Israel) for in and through David were God's covenant blessings to be accomplished (1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19).

- 18] And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which *was* of the sons of the giant.

Other Philistine encounters, at Gob and Gath, followed the one just recorded. At Gob (Gezer in 1 Chr 20:4), Sibbecai, a heroic Israelite, slew Saph (Sippai in 1 Chr 20:4), another Philistine giant (Rapha is from "Rephaim," a race of giants; cf. 2 Sam 21:16).

## Summary: Post-Flood *Nephilim*

Regarding the *Nephilim*, Genesis 6:4 also includes the haunting phrase, "...and also after that...." Apparently these strange events were not confined just to the period *before* the Flood.

We find that there seems to be some recurrence of those things which resulted in unusual "giants" appearing in subsequent periods later in the Old Testament narrative, specifically the giant-races of Canaan.

There were a number of tribes such as the *Rephaim*,<sup>1</sup> the *Emim*,<sup>2</sup> the *Horim*,<sup>3</sup> and *Zamsummim*,<sup>4</sup> that were giants.<sup>5</sup> The kingdom of Og, the King of Bashan, was the "land of the giants."<sup>6</sup> Later, we also find Arba,<sup>7</sup> Anak, and his seven sons (the "*Anakim*"<sup>8</sup> Deut 2:10,11,21; Joshua 11:21,22; 14:12,15) also as giants, along with the famed Goliath<sup>9</sup> and his four brothers.<sup>10</sup> They were a nomadic race of giants, descended from Arba (Joshua 14:15); the father of Anak (Joshua 11:21; Numbers 13:33; Deut 9:2). When God had revealed to Abraham that the land of Canaan was to be given to him, Satan had over 400 years to plant his "mine field" of *Nephilim*.<sup>11</sup>

When Moses sent his twelve spies to reconnoiter the Land of Canaan, they came back with the report of giants in the land.<sup>12</sup> (The very term used was *Nephilim*.) Their fear of those terrifying creatures resulted in their being relegated to wandering in the wilderness for 38 years.

When Joshua and the nation Israel later entered the land of Canaan, they were instructed to wipe out every man, woman and child of certain tribes.<sup>13</sup> That strikes us as disturbingly severe. It would seem that in the Land of Canaan, there again was a "gene pool problem." These *Rephaim*, *Nephilim*, and others seem to have been established as an advance guard to obstruct Israel's possession of the Promised Land. Was this also a stratagem of Satan?



- 19] And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew *the brother of Goliath* the Gittite, the staff of whose spear *was* like a weaver's beam.

Again at Gob, Elhanan felled a giant, Goliath. (Because Elhanan was from Bethlehem, some scholars believe that he was David and that the present passage recapitulates David's former exploit. Against this is the lack of evidence to equate Elhanan with David and the fact that the accounts in both verses 18-22 and 1 Chronicles 20:4-8 follow that of David's conquest of Goliath by many years. The chronicler in fact stated that the giant killed by Elhanan was Goliath's brother Lahmi (1 Chron. 20:5). The resolution of the problem might well be that two Philistines were named Goliath, one killed by David and the other by Elhanan. Perhaps the Chronicles version is an attempt to clear up the confusion of two giants with the same name.)

- 20] And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of *great* stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant.

- 21] And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea the brother of David slew him.

A conflict at Gath involved a giant (descended from Rapha; cf. 2 Sam. 21:16, 18) with six digits on each hand and foot. He was slain by David's nephew Jonathan, named, of course, for David's dear friend. With this giant's death the terror caused by the Philistine giants came to an end.

- 22] These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) What were the challenges facing David after the defeat of Absalom? How was David's mourning for Absalom a detriment to the kingdom?
- 2) Why did David appoint Amasa to replace Joab? Was this wise? Why?
- 3) Why were Saul's seven sons executed? What was the error with regards to the Gibeonites?
- 4) Why did David pick up 5 stones when he crossed the brook (1 Samuel 17:40)?

## Discussion Questions

("Where two people agree, one is redundant.")

- 1) Discuss the loyalties and shortcomings of Joab. How was he an asset to David? A liability?
- 2) Discuss David's handling of the matter of Mephibosheth.
- 3) Discuss the factors leading to the growing schism between Judah and the northern tribes which would ultimately result in splitting the nation.

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated, and tolerant of spooky stuff.)

- 1) Review the occurrences of "*Rephaim*" in the Old Testament and explore the role of post-flood *Nephilim* in the Bible.
- 2) What is unique about the geography of Bashan, and the Golan heights? Is there a *spiritual* history of the Og, the Rephaim, etc.? Were they *Nephilim*?
- 3) What is implied by the "bulls of Bashan" in Psalm 22:12 regarding the crucifixion?
- 4) Is there a hidden significance of "dust" in Scripture (Cf. Gen 3:14, Dan 2:43, et al.)?

## Preparation for Next Session:

Read 2 Samuel 22-24 (& 1 Chr 21-29).

### Notes:

1. The Rephaim were a race of giants (Deut 3:11) who lived on the east of the Jordan, from whom Og was descended. They were conquered by Chedorlaomer (Genesis 14:5), and their territories were promised as a possession to Abraham (Genesis 15:20).
2. They were terrors, a warlike tribe of giants who were defeated by Chedorlaomer and his allies in the plain of Kiriathaim. In the time of Abraham they occupied the country east of the Jordan, afterwards the land of the Moabites (Genesis 14:5; Deut 2:10). They were, like the Anakim, reckoned among the Rephaim, and were conquered by the Moabites, who gave them the name of Emims; i.e., "terrible men" (Deut 2:11).



3. The inhabitants of Mt. Seir before its occupation by the Edomites (Dt 2:12).
4. A race of giants: “a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims” (Deut 2:20,21). They were overcome by the Ammonites, “who called them Zamzummims.”
5. Genesis 14:5; 15:20; Deuteronomy 2:10-12, 22.
6. Deuteronomy 3:11, 13; Joshua 12:4; 13:12.
7. Joshua 14:15; 15:13; 21:11. They dwelt in the south of Palestine, in the neighborhood of Hebron (Genesis 23:2; Joshua 15:13,14; 21:11).
9. 1 Samuel 17:4ff.
10. 2 Samuel 21:16-22.
11. Genesis 15:13-21.
12. Numbers 13:33.
13. Joshua 6:21; 9:24; 10:28, 39; 11:24; Deut 2:34; 7:2, 3; 20:16-17; et al. Cf. 1 Sam 15:3, 8, 18, 19; Ps 137:8, 9.

## Session 8

### 2 Samuel 22-24 (1 Chr 21-29)

### David’s Final Words

#### 2 Samuel 22

#### A Psalm Extolling the Lord

This composition, set between the account of David’s Philistine wars (21:15-22) and his list of heroes (23:8-39), is a poem celebrating the providence of God in delivering him from all his enemies (cf. v. 4).

(It is found again in almost identical wording in **Psalm 18**, a piece that is generally classified from a literary standpoint as a royal hymn of thanksgiving.)

- 1] And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day *that* the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul:
- 2] And he said, The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
- 3] The God of my rock; in him will I trust: *he is* my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.

In a manner characteristic of this literary form, the Psalmist David first acknowledged the greatness and glory of the LORD in a series of designations—Rock, Fortress, Deliverer, Shield, Horn, Salvation, Stronghold, Refuge, and Savior. All God’s exploits in the past and promises for

the future are predicated on who He is. These descriptions of the LORD are especially appropriate in light of the setting of the song, that of flight, conflict, and victory.

- 4] I will call on the LORD, *who is* worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.
- 5] When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid;
- 6] The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me;
- 7] In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry *did enter* into his ears.

David was quite conscious of history and of God’s providential arrangement of its particulars. He saw this in respect to his own peculiar circumstances which he described hyperbolically as being akin to death. So desperate had been his peril that death was imminent. It was only the mercy of God in response to his prayer which brought David salvation from heaven (His temple).

- 8] Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth.
- 9] There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

From David, as a center of God’s saving purposes, the exploits of the Lord ranged almost concentrically to the arena of the whole earth (vv. 8-9). With reference, perhaps, to prevailing pagan myths about Creation, David showed that it is the Lord who controls the earth. In His anger He shook the whole cosmos as an expression of His concern for David.

- 10] He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness *was* under his feet.
- 11] And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind.
- 12] And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, *and* thick clouds of the skies.
- 13] Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled.
- 14] The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice.
- 15] And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them.
- 16] And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

But the sovereignty of God goes even further. He is Lord also of the heavens (vv. 10-16). Though Baal, the Canaanite god, was known to his worshipers as “the rider of the clouds,” it is Yahweh who is enthroned in the heavens and who reduces all Creation to His service. With lightning and a voice like thunder He cried out against His (and David’s)

enemies, terrifying them. The God of Creation rearranged Creation, as it were, on David's behalf.

- 17] He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters;
- 18] He delivered me from my strong enemy, *and* from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me.
- 19] They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.
- 20] He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

That David refers to God's mighty works (vv. 8-16) as an expression not of His role of Creator as such, but as One powerful to save is clear from the conclusion of the passage (vv. 17-20): God had delivered him from his enemies because he was the object of God's mercy and grace. God's deliverance is expressed in several verbs: (a) reached down, (b) took hold, (c) drew out, (d) rescued (vv. 18, 20), (e) brought out.

- 21] The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

God's deliverance of David was followed by His blessings, divine rewards commensurate with David's own righteousness. David did not suggest that works are necessary for salvation, which is not the issue here. He was saying, however, that the benefits of God are often obtained in this life by faithful perseverance in godliness.

- 22] For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.
- 23] For all his judgments *were* before me: and *as for* his statutes, I did not depart from them.

He kept God's ways (v. 22), law (v. 23), and decrees (v. 23), and refrained from iniquity (v. 24; cf. vv. 21, 25).

- 24] I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity.
- 25] Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye sight.

God therefore rewarded him (v. 25) and showed mercy to him as He does to all who are upright (faithful, blameless, pure, humble; vv. 26-28).

- 26] With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, *and* with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright.
- 27] With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury.

- 28] And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes *are* upon the haughty, *that* thou mayest bring *them* down.

The wicked, on the other hand, because of their pride cannot expect His favor.

- 29] For thou *art* my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness.
- 30] For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall.

With God, who gives light as a lamp (v. 29), a righteous person is invincible. He can break through barricades (not "a troop") or scale the highest walls (v. 30). In the final section of the psalm David turned once more to the attributes of the LORD, but he connected them now to specific ways in which God had worked and would work on his behalf. God was described first as a Strengthener (vv. 31-35); One who is a Shield, a Rock, a Strength (lit., "strong Refuge" or "Fortress"); One who gives speed and power to His own servants.

- 31] *As for* God, his way *is* perfect; the word of the LORD *is* tried: he *is* a buckler to all them that trust in him.
- 32] For who *is* God, save the LORD? and who *is* a rock, save our God?
- 33] God *is* my strength *and* power: and he maketh my way perfect.
- 34] He maketh my feet like hinds' *feet*: and setteth me upon my high places.
- 35] He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.
- 36] Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great.
- 37] Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip.
- 38] I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them.
- 39] And I have consumed them, and wounded them, that they could not arise: yea, they are fallen under my feet.
- 40] For thou hast girded me with strength to battle: them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me.
- 41] Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me.

Again, He is a Subduer of enemies (vv. 38-41). Through the LORD, David was able to pursue and destroy his enemies so that they could not rise again.

- 42] They looked, but *there was* none to save; *even* unto the LORD, but he answered them not.

The Lord also is a Support (vv. 42-46). David's enemies called out to God but He would not answer them.

- 43] Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, *and* did spread them abroad.
- 44] Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, thou hast kept me *to be* head of the heathen: a people *which* I knew not shall serve me.
- 45] Strangers shall submit themselves unto me: as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me.
- 46] Strangers shall fade away, and they shall be afraid out of their close places.

Instead He let David crush them (v. 43), and rule over them as well as over his own people (vv. 44-46).

- 47] The LORD liveth; and blessed *be* my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation.
- 48] It *is* God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me,
- 49] And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.
- 50] Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name.
- 51] *He is* the tower of salvation for his king: and sheweth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore.

Finally, David said that the Lord was his Savior (vv. 47-51). Though his enemies surrounded him and were about to destroy him, the Lord brought him through triumphantly. As a result David praised Him (v. 50) and acknowledged that all God's benefits of the past were tokens of His promised blessings on both David and his descendants, blessings which will endure forever.

## 2 Samuel 23 David's Heroes

- 1] Now these *be* the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man *who was* raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,
- 2] The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue.

The list of David's mighty men is preceded by a short poem (vv. 1-7) titled the last words of David. In the first stanza. There is a noticeable progress from the humble son of a Bethlehemite commoner to the poetically gifted king of Israel, a development which David attributed to his having been chosen and anointed by the Lord.

- 3] The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be* just, ruling in the fear of God.

- 4] And *he shall be* as the light of the morning, *when* the sun riseth, *even* a morning without clouds; *as* the tender grass *springing* out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

His consciousness of being God's instrument is clear from the second stanza (vv. 2-4), in which he acknowledged that God had spoken to him (v. 3) and through him (v. 2) to the nation, enabling him to rule righteously in the reverential fear of God. A king who rules as an agent of God is, he said, like the brilliance of the sun on a cloudless morning and like a clear day after rain. In the third stanza (vv. 5-7) David centered on the Davidic Covenant, by which God chose and blessed him. God had made an everlasting commitment with him and his dynasty (my house), a covenant that guaranteed his ultimate well-being (cf. 7:8-16). In contrast, evil men, like so many thorns, will be cast aside to be consumed by the judgment of God (cf. Matt. 13:30, 41).

- 5] Although my house *be* not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure: for *this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire, although he make *it* not to grow.
- 6] But *the sons* of Belial *shall be* all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands:
- 7] But the man *that* shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the *same* place.

## David's Mighty Men

- 8] These *be* the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same *was* Adino the Eznite: *he lift up his spear* against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.

David's gallery of heroes consisted of 37 men (v. 39) who distinguished themselves by mighty exploits of service to God and Israel and who evidently made up his elite troops. These consisted of :

- three chief men (vv. 8-17),
- two others of a second rank (vv. 18-23), and
- 32 in the longest list (vv. 24-39).

Significant by its omission is any reference to Joab. Two of his brothers—Abishai and Asahel—are listed (vv. 8, 24). Neither the author of Samuel nor that of the Chronicles (1 Chr 11:11-47) felt it necessary, perhaps, to list Joab since he was the commander of the whole army throughout most of David's reign (20:23). [Though the spellings of several of the names differ in the corresponding list in 1 Chr 11:11-47, the names can usually be equated. The chronicler does, however, add names

beyond the 37 in 2 Samuel. Perhaps they were men of lower ranks than those listed in Samuel or perhaps they replaced others (already listed) who had fallen in battle.]

- 9] And after him *was* Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, *one* of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines *that* were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away:
- 10] He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.
- 11] And after him *was* Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines.

The first three were:

- a) Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemomite, who slew “800” men in one encounter (2 Sam 23:8); [1 Chr 11:11 has 300: the Hebrew symbols for 300 and 800 look very similar, and may have a scribal error.]
- b) Eleazar, son of Dodai the Ahohite, who struck down the Philistines (2 Sam 23:9-10) at Pas Dammim (1 Chr 11:13; cf. Ephes Dammim in 1 Sam 17:1); and
- c) Shammah son of Agee the Hararite, who brought great victory over the Philistines (2 Sam 23:11-12).

These three also displayed their courage by obtaining water from Bethlehem for David while he was besieged in the summer (harvesttime) by the Philistines at Adullam (vv. 13-15; cf. 1 Sam 22:1). So touched was David by their valor that he refused to drink the water but poured it out as an offering to the LORD (2 Sam 23:16-17). (Most scholars deny that the three involved are those just named since the word “three” has no definite article in the Hebrew text in verse 13. On the other hand verse 17 implies that all the foregoing had been done by these three and this time the definite article is used.)

- 12] But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory.
- 13] And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim.
- 14] And David *was* then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines *was* then *in* Bethlehem.
- 15] And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which *is* by the gate!
- 16] And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew

water out of the well of Bethlehem, that *was* by the gate, and took *it*, and brought *it* to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD.

- 17] And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: *is not this* the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.
- 18] And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, *and* slew *them*, and had the name among three.

Included in the second rank were Abishai, son of Zeruiah (and nephew of David, 1 Chr 2:15-16) who was chief of the second 3 (or “30,” NIV marg.) but not as exalted as the first 3 previously listed (2 Sam 23:18-19; cf. 1 Sam 26:6-11; 2 Sam 10:14; 21:16-17), and Benaiah, who achieved notable victories over both men and a lion (23:20-23; cf. 8:18; 1 Kgs 1:32, 36, 38; 2:35; 4:4).

- 19] Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the *first* three.
- 20] And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow:
- 21] And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian’s hand, and slew him with his own spear.
- 22] These *things* did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men.
- 23] He was more honourable than the thirty, but he attained not to the *first* three. And David set him over his guard.
- 24] Asahel the brother of Joab *was* one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem,

The longest list consists of 32 men. Such a group normally consisted of 30 men but might have a few more or less and still be known as “the 30,” a technical term for a small military contingent known in Hebrew as השלושים *hashelowshiyim* (“the 30”). Or perhaps two had died in battle (including Uriah the Hittite, 2 Sam 11:14-17) and were replaced.

- 25] Shammah the Harodite, Elikai the Harodite,
- 26] Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesheh the Tekoite,
- 27] Abiezer the Anethothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite,
- 28] Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite,
- 29] Heleb the son of Baanah, a Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai out of Gibeath of the children of Benjamin,
- 30] Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash,
- 31] Abialbon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite,
- 32] Eliahba the Shaalbonite, of the sons of Jashen, Jonathan,



- 33] Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite,
- 34] Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,
- 35] Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite,
- 36] Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite,
- 37] Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armourbearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah,
- 38] Ira an Ithrite, Gareb an Ithrite,
- 39] Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all.

## 2 Samuel 24

### David's Sin in Taking a Census

- 1] And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

It is impossible to determine the date of this episode from 2 Samuel alone, but the parallel version in 1 Chronicles 21 places it just prior to David's instructions to Solomon about building the temple (1 Chr 21:28-22:19). This census must have come late in David's reign, and may have been part of the plan of dynastic succession in anticipation of Solomon's coming to power.

For reasons not stated, the LORD was angry against Israel (the again of 2 Sam 24:1 may refer to 21:1), and He led David to command that a census be taken. In 1 Chronicles 21:1 this motivation is attributed to (lit.) "a Satan" (or adversary). This is no contradiction for the Lord had simply allowed Satan to prompt David to an improper course of action in order that Israel might be punished and that David might be instructed. This is similar to the Lord's permitting Satan to trouble Job (Job 1:12; 2:6) and His allowing an evil spirit to torment Saul (1 Sam 16:14). In any case, the Lord Himself did not incite David to do evil for "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone" (James 1:13).

- 2] For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which *was* with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.
- 3] And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see *it*: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?

The reasons for David's desire for a census are not clear either, though the fact that he only had military men counted (2 Sam 24:2, 9) suggests that he was interested in determining his military strength. Censuses in

the Middle East always have been frowned upon, for the purposes of counting the people were to determine tax proportions and to conscript for war service. And herein lay the sin—he probably did this so he could boast in human might. This may be implied in Joab's query as to why the census was to be undertaken. God was able, Joab said, to multiply their troops as much as necessary, so why did David feel the need to assess his strength?

- 4] Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.
- 5] And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city that *lieth* in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer:
- 6] Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtimhodshi; and they came to Danjaan, and about to Zidon,
- 7] And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah, *even* to Beersheba.
- 8] So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.
- 9] And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah *were* five hundred thousand men.

Beginning in the Transjordan they went counterclockwise north to Dan Jaan (a variation of Dan), then west and southwest of Sidon and Tyre, throughout the plains and valleys of Canaanite and Hivite (Horites or Hurrians) population, and south to Beersheba. Finally, after nine months and 20 days, the report was given; there were 800,000 eligible fighting men in Israel and 500,000 in Judah (v. 9).

[The figures in 1 Chronicles are 1,100,000 men in Israel and 470,000 in Judah, but the chronicler wrote that the Levites and Benjamites were not included (1 Chron. 21:5-6). The reconciliation of the data may lie in the possibility that 1,100,000 describes the grand total for Israel including the standing army which consisted of 12 units of 24,000 men each (288,000, 1 Chron. 27:1-15) plus 12,000 especially attached to Jerusalem and the chariot cities (2 Chron. 1:14). These 300,000 subtracted from 1,100,000 would yield the 800,000 figure in 2 Samuel 24:9. Also the chronicler may not have included the 30,000-man standing army of Judah (6:1) whereas they were included in chapter 24. This would raise the 470,000 total of Chronicles to the 500,000 of Samuel. This is only one solution, but with so little information available as to how the sums were obtained nothing further can be said with certainty.]



- 10] And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

After David received the report, he realized his sin of pride and self-sufficiency and confessed this sin (which he called a very foolish thing) to the LORD (1 Chron. 21:7 points out that the Lord punished Israel, thus indicating the evil of the census).

- 11] For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying,  
12] Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three *things*; choose thee one of them, that I may *do it* unto thee.  
13] So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me.

The Lord then sent Gad, a prophet, to David with a list of three calamities from which he could choose and by which the Lord would register His displeasure and purge out the evil. The choices were: three years of famine; three months of enemy pursuit, or three days of pestilence. [Though the Heb. reads "seven" years of famine, 1 Chr 21:12, probably a better-preserved text, reads "three," as the NIV has it.]

- 14] And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies *are* great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.

David chose the third option, throwing himself on the mercy of God.

- 15] So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.  
16] And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.

When Jerusalem itself was threatened, the LORD intervened and commanded His angelic destroyer to desist. David then confessed his own personal sin and urged the LORD to spare His innocent people. Then, in order to make proper restitution and atonement, David arranged to construct an altar to the LORD. Gad told him that it must be built on the threshing floor of Araunah, a citizen of Jerusalem, since it was there that the angel had been commanded to cease his destruction of the city.

This threshing floor was a saddleback with a wide, smooth, ledge-like surface at about 741 meters above sea level just outside the northern wall of David's Jerusalem, on the ridge system known as Mount Moriah.

- 17] And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.  
18] And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite.

(But David had no right to it because it was owned by a citizen.)

- 19] And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded.  
20] And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground.  
21] And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people.

When Araunah learned of David's desire, however, he was willing not only to give the threshing floor to the king but also to provide the wood and sacrifices needed (v. 22). To this gracious offer David could only give a negative response. How could he sacrifice to the LORD what cost him nothing? That would be a denial of the very meaning of sacrifice. Araunah therefore sold him the threshing floor and oxen for 50 shekels of silver (the 600 shekels of gold in 1 Chr 21:25 includes, however, "the site," more than just the threshing floor). Fifty shekels was about 1 1/2 pounds of silver. The silver David paid was only for the oxen and the threshing floor, and the 600 shekels (15 pounds of gold) mentioned in 1 Chr 21:25 was for the lot of land surrounding the threshing floor.

- 22] And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what *seemeth* good unto him: behold, *here be* oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and *other* instruments of the oxen for wood.  
23] All these *things* did Araunah, *as a king*, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee.  
24] And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy *it* of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.  
25] And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

Having obtained the site, David built the altar, offered the sacrifices, and interceded on behalf of his people. God heard and answered, and the land was healed of the plague. On this same spot Solomon later constructed

his magnificent temple (1 Chr 22:1; 2 Chr 3:1). [There is a widespread tradition that this was where Abraham had offered Isaac (Gen 22:2); however, we believe that this occurred at the peak of Mt. Moriah, 777 meters above sea level, further north, outside the “Damascus Gate,” where the Garden Tomb can presently be seen.]

## Study Questions

(For the diligent student.)

- 1) Compare the Psalm in 2 Samuel Chapter 22 with Psalm 18. Profile David’s spiritual posture in both.
- 2) What do the first 7 verses of Chapter 23 teach about David’s leadership?
- 3) Describe the “inner 3” of David’s mighty men. Why wasn’t Joab included?
- 4) Why was David’s census a sin?
- 5) Reconcile the ostensible discrepancies in the census as recorded in 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles.

## Discussion Questions

(“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”)

- 1) Contrast the “inner 3” of David’s mighty men with the “inner 3” of the 12 disciples.
- 2) Why was David’s census a sin? Why did God offer three choices for punishment? Why was Israel a party to the punishment?
- 3) What have been the main spiritual lessons from the life of David recorded in 2 Samuel?

## Research Projects

(For the truly dedicated.)

- 1) Contrast the tradition of Abraham’s offering of Isaac having occurred at the Threshing Floor of Arunah, where the Temple was built, versus the knoll to the north adjacent to the Garden Tomb.

- 2) List 18 indications from the Biblical text that seem to support the Garden Tomb as the actual tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

## Preparation for Next Session:

Study the First Book of Kings.

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# About The Cover Design

*(on the tape cassette volumes)*

## The “Front” cover:

The Greek border: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8).” The center design element symbolizes the Word of God Incarnate, illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

## The “Back” cover: (the “front” to the Jewish reader)

The Hebrew border: “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (from the Sh’ma, Deut 6:4-5).”

The center design represents the Burning Bush, made up of Hebrew letters which proclaim “the Eternal One cannot lie.”

## The Spine:

The spine includes a Menorah from the Old Testament, a Maranatha Dove suggesting the New Testament, and the Koinonia House logo at the base.



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